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MEDITATIONS

FOR THE USE OF

SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

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MEDITATIONS

FOR THE USE OF

SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

BY

Very Rev. L. BRANCHEREAU, S. S.

Translated and adapted

VOLUME V

LITURGICAL YEAR

Continued

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MORNING PRAYERS

Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trinitas, nunc et semper, et per infinita sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

I adore thee, most august Majesty, one God, in three persons; I adore thy divine perfections incomprehensible to men and angels. Being nothing of myself and unable to honor thee as thou deservest to be honored, I offer thee all the homage and praise which thy Incarnate Word offers for me in heaven and upon earth, and with my whole heart, I unite in all that his Holy Spirit operates for thy glory in his members. Most holy and most adorable Trinity, suffer me, through Jesus Christ, our mediator with thee, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit, to offer thee my feeble tribute of homage.

Act of Adoration.

Eternal Father, I adore thee as my Creator; I revere that boundless love and goodness which induced thy supreme Majesty to look down upon a less than nothing, and to bring me into existence. Eternal Word, I adore thee as my Redeemer who, equal to thy Father, didst, in the womb of thy mother, make thyself like unto us, taking upon thyself the form of a servant, living in poverty and dying in ignominy, to rise again in glory like unto that of thy Father, in order to teach us to live penitently, and to resign ourselves submis-

sively to our sentence of death, with the full assurance of being made, by the resurrection, partakers of the glory of the children of God. Divine Spirit, I adore thee, the sanctifier of my soul, who dost consume sin in my heart by the fire of thy holy love, and dost descend continually into this abyss of iniquity, my heart, in order that by breathing into it that life-giving holiness which thou dost draw from the bosom of the Father and the Son, thou mayest make me worthy of being associated with them in their glory.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Eternal Father, I thank thee for having with such great love created me; having with so much patience borne with me in spite of my transgressions, and especially for having preserved me during the past night and given me this day in which to serve and honor thee. Son of God, I thank thee for having by the labors of thy life and the sufferings of thy death preserved me a thousand times from hell, and merited for me all the blessings which are found in thy Church. Divine Spirit, I thank thee for having deigned to infuse so many gifts and graces into my soul and for having so often begotten me anew by thy sanctifying grace, notwithstanding all the contempt I have shown for thy blessings.

Act of Contrition.

Pardon, I beseech thee, Eternal Father, the wretched use I have made of the body and the soul

which thou hast given me with so much goodness, and hast preserved with so much mercy. I beg forgiveness, O Son of God, for having profited so little by the holy example of thy life, by the counsels of thy holy Gospel, and by the graces of all thy holy Sacraments. Divine Spirit, forgive me the contempt which I have shown for thy inspirations, for thy lights and for that lively repentance which it hath pleased thee to excite in my soul.

Act of Oblation.

Eternal Father, I offer thee all the actions of this day, and I renounce all the self-satisfaction I might feel in them. Eternal Word, I offer thee all my thoughts and words, and beforehand I condemn all that are vain and useless. Spirit of God, I consecrate to thee all the affections of my heart, and I renounce all the irregular desires of nature.

Act of Resignation.

Eternal Father, I renounce all confidence in my own strength and give myself entirely to thee, that thou mayest be my strength and support. Son of God, I condemn all the presumption of my own mind and give myself up entirely to thee, to be governed by thy wisdom alone. Divine Spirit, I sacrifice to thee all my natural inclinations, in order to follow the desires of sanctity which thou implantest in pious souls. Eternal Father, do thou perfect my soul; Son of God, do thou enlighten it; Holy Spirit, do thou direct it.

Pater Noster. Ave Maria. Credo.

I offer thee once more, O my God, my thoughts, my words, and my actions, in union with those of Jesus Christ, that they may be worthy of being received by thee; and I renounce every intention, but that which he would have, were he upon earth and in my place. I unite, O my God, with his Divine Spirit, who causes thee to be loved and adored by all the angels and saints, and who fills heaven and earth with holy praises of thee, that aided by that Holy Spirit I may join with all those creatures who honor thee, and especially with those who honor thee by mental prayer.[1]

[1] From the *Journée Chrétienne* of Father Olier.

Some may prefer the following shorter form of morning prayers.

Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trinitas, nunc et semper et per infinita sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

O Almighty and Eternal God: in union with all thy elect in heaven and on earth, I adore thee, I love thee, I praise and thank thee for all the gifts of nature and grace, which I have received from thy infinite goodness. I thank thee principally for having created me to thy image and likeness, and preserved me to this day: for having given thy only begotten Son to suffer death for me on the cross, and to wash away my sins with his most precious blood. I thank thee for having called me to the faith of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; for having so often pardoned me my sins, for having watched over me during this past night, and preserved me from a sudden death and from all the other evils which might have befallen me, had I not been protected by thy merciful and watchful Providence.

Would that I could make thee, O Lord, in return for all thy mercies, an offering of gratitude and love proportionate to their number and greatness. Of myself indeed I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing worthy of thee. But since, by a wonderful device of thy wisdom and love, I have access to thy majesty through Christ my Savior, I humbly offer thee, in union with him and through his Sacred Heart, whatever I possess, my body, my senses, all the powers of my soul. I firmly purpose by thy divine grace not to think, say or do anything unworthy of one called to the priesthood.

Help me, O Lord, to curb my evil inclinations, and so guide and sustain me in all things that every thought, word and action of mine may tend to thy greater glory, the sanctification of my soul and the good of those around me.

Pater Noster. Ave Maria. Credo.

Domine Deus Omnipotens, qui ad principium hujus diei nos pervenire fecisti, tua nos hodie salva virtute, ut in hac die ad nullum declinemus peccatum, sed semper ad tuam justitiam faciendam nostra procedant eloquia, dirigantur cogitationes et opera. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum pietate superna illumina, custodi, rege, et guberna. Amen.

Dominus nos benedicat et ab omni malo defendat et ad vitam perducat æternam; et fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

Before beginning meditation, there are always three things to be done:

1. *To place ourselves in the presence of God by two acts, one of faith, the other of adoration.*

My God, I firmly believe, on the authority of thy word, that thou art here present, and in the inmost recesses of my heart, as truly as that thou art in heaven, in the midst of saints and angels. O Sovereign Majesty, my God, before whom the whole universe is but as dust, I prostrate myself before thee, acknowledging that thou art my Creator and that I am thy creature and thus I offer the homage of my whole being to thy supreme Majesty.

2. *To acknowledge ourselves unworthy of appearing before God, and thus to excite ourselves to contrition.*

I confess, O my God, that I am unworthy to appear in thy presence. I acknowledge that I do not deserve that thou shouldst look upon me, on account of my nothingness, my vileness and my numberless sins. Yea, Lord, I am filled with confusion at the sight of my own misery caused by my own sins; but I do heartily repent having offended thee. I am sorry, because thou art infinitely good, and because sin is so displeasing to thee. Prostrate at thy feet, I implore thy grace that I may be converted, and may do penance before thee.

Confiteor, etc.

3. *To unite ourselves to Jesus Christ in order to appear before his Father in his name; and implore the aid of the Holy Ghost for our meditation.*

Not in my own name, O my God, have I the blindness to address my prayer to thee; it is in the name of thy well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; all my confidence is in him. Clothed in his merits I present myself before thee, to implore thy grace, like Jacob of old clad in the garments of his elder brother, presenting himself before his father to ask his blessing. I know that of myself I can have neither a good thought nor even a desire that shall conduce to my salvation. Have mercy on me, O God! I humbly confess my nothingness and my wretchedness; I renounce my own thoughts and my earthly affections, and give myself up entirely to thy divine Spirit. Come then, O Holy Ghost! enlighten my darkness; inflame my lukewarmness; strengthen my weakness. I desire to make this meditation by thy lights, by thy impulse, and under thy guidance.

Holy Virgin, mother of divine wisdom and purest love help me, I beseech Thee, to obtain this grace.

After Meditation.

O Jesu vivens in Maria, veni, et vive in famulis tuis, in spiritu sanctitatis tuæ, in plenitudine virtutis tuæ, in perfectione viarum tuarum, in veritate virtutum tuarum, in communione mysteriorum tuorum; dominare omni adversæ potestati in Spiritu tuo ad gloriam Patris. Amen.

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I. PASSIONTIDE

I

PASSION SUNDAY

THE STANDARD OF THE CROSS

SUMMARY

I. We will adore Christ receiving the cross and carrying it from the pretorium to Calvary. We will contemplate him dying thereon for the salvation of the world. We will adore the cross, the instrument of his suffering, now the glorious *signum Filii hominis*.

II. We will consider the cross as

1. *The standard about which the soldiers of Christ are gathered.* He wishes us also to carry the cross in his footsteps. It possesses a charm for those who enlist under its standard.

2. *It is our standard in the heat of battle,* rekindling our courage in every trial. Our Lord triumphed by the cross. The Church and her children will triumph by the same standard.

3. *It is the trophy of victory.* On judgment day it will precede the coming of Christ. It is a source of consolation for us in this life and will be a trophy of victory in the next.

III. We will tell our Lord we wish his cross to triumph in our heart.

We will enlist among its followers.

We will resolve to love the cross, to have recourse to the cross in our trials and temptations.

O crux, ave, spes unica.

Adoration

The royal banners forward go;
The cross shines forth in mystic glow.[1]

With this magnificent prelude, holy Church announces the beginning of the great paschal solemnities. In the same sentiment let us contemplate Christ receiving on his bruised shoulders the cross they have prepared for him, on which he is going to consummate his sacrifice. Let us follow him as he advances under the heavy burden from the pretorium to Calvary. There he is nailed to the cross and, suspended between heaven and earth, he dies. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory.*[2]

We are the soldiers of this Chief, the subjects of this King, the disciples of this Master. Let us renew our fidelity to him and repeat the words spoken by Ethai to David:

In what place soever thou shalt be, my lord king,

[1] Hymn. Passion Sun. [2] Luke **24**[26]

either in death or in life, there will thy servant be.[1]

The cross, once the instrument of his suffering, has become the glorious *signum Filii hominis.*[2] It shared his ignominy; now it shares his glory. Let us adore the cross as the sacred memorial of the Savior's passion and death.

Crux, alma, salve, crux venerabilis,
Torrente Christi sanguinis ebria,
Testis dolorum, tu suprema
Verba Dei morientis audis.[3]

Considerations

Military leaders display their standards when setting out for war, in the heat of battle, and after their victory. We may likewise regard Christ the King of souls, displaying the standard of the cross.

1. *The cross is the standard which Christ uses to gather his soldiers about him.* It is erected on Calvary and Christ permits himself to be fastened upon it. Thither he summons us. The great ones of earth proudly display the emblems of their nobility. But

[1] II Kings **15**[21]
[2] Matt. **24**[30]
[3] Hymn. Eccl.

Christ wishes no other sign of his royalty but that of the cross on which he dies. The mystery of the cross is his mystery par excellence, the culminating point of his life. This is the mystery which the Church proposes to the devotion of the faithful in preference to all others, presenting Christ crucified to us in many different forms.

Our Lord appears to us armed with the cross not merely as the object of our adoration but that we may receive that sacred standard from his hands and carry it after his example. *If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*[1]

He entered into his glory by the way of the cross, that is by suffering and humiliation. For us, his followers, there is no other way. Consequently the cross is the symbol of the Christian life. It signifies painful struggle, suffering, persecution, contempt, and all the trials of human life that we must endure to reach the kingdom of God.

This standard summons us to gather about our Lord. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.*[2] And

[1] MATT. 16[24] [2] JOHN 12[32]

the world has witnessed the fulfilment of that promise. In spite of its severity, it possesses a mysterious charm appreciated by those who, by the inspiration of grace, enlist under this divine standard, to walk in the footsteps of Christ.

The cross was the dominant subject of the apostolic preaching. *We preach Christ crucified,*[1] says St. Paul. And again: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[2] *For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified.*[3]

2. *The cross is our standard in the heat of battle* beside our divine leader. For on earth the life of the Church and of her members is a struggle. Whence shall we derive strength for this strife? From Christ, of course, but from Christ on the cross. *In the cross is salvation,* says the author of the Imitation; *in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies; in the cross is strength of mind.*[4]

In battle courage is rekindled at sight of the standard. This is the effect produced in Christian souls at sight of the standard of

[1] I Cor. 1[23]
[2] Gal. 6[14]
[3] I Cor. 2[2]
[4] Imit. II, 12[2]

the cross. How often a glance at the cross has sustained our courage when we were growing weak; how often has it consoled us; how often has it turned defeat into victory!

Our Lord triumphed over his enemies and ours by the cross. It has also been the instrument of the Church's victories. The apostles, martyrs, all the saints have reached heaven by the power of the cross. The same power will lead us there if we are faithful to its teaching. Is it any wonder, then, that the Church keeps it so constantly before us and urges us frequently to make the sign of the cross?

3. *The cross is the trophy of victory.* By fighting under the protection and by the power of the cross, we will have the consolation of seeing it glorious and triumphant in heaven. St. Matthew tells us that at the last day *shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven.*[1] In magnificent language St. Peter Damian describes this triumph of the cross. "You must know," he says, "that on judgment day the blessed cross will be carried by the hands of angels and will be resplendent before the eyes of all mankind. Its divine

[1] MATT. 24[30]

splendor will make it more brilliant than the sun and stars. It will appear for the glory of those who have loved it, for the eternal reproach of those who have refused to carry it in the footsteps of the Savior."[1]

On the last day the cross will triumph in Christ and in the Church: in Christ, because he will make it share his glory; in the Church, because she will acknowledge that her victory was due to that sacred standard.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, while awaiting that blessed day of the triumph of thy cross, I wish it to triumph henceforth in my heart. Grant that I may enlist among its followers. It is contemned by the world. *Unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness.*[2] But we esteem it as the expression of thy infinite wisdom and the symbol of thy power.

Thy friends gather about the cross. There I find thy blessed Mother, the beloved apostle, the repentant Magdalen. During these holy

[1] Serm. **48** *De Exalt. S. Crucis*

[2] I Cor. **1**[23]

days thy summons is especially urgent for us to compassionate thy sufferings on the cross. Who can calculate the abundance of grace and consolation which thou wilt bestow on those who answer thy call?

I resolve to love the cross; to have recourse to the cross in my trials and temptations.

O Crux, ave, spes unica.[1]

[1] Hymn. Pass.

II

THE PROPITIATORY LIFE OF CHRIST

SUMMARY

I. We will adore God instituting the law of expiation. Man can accomplish no great work without laborious effort. Every religion has had sacrifice as its central act. We will adore in our Lord the perfect fulfillment of this holy but rigorous law.

II. We will consider the propitiatory life of Christ, our victim.

1. *Its source and principle* are in Christ's sacred heart. As soon as he entered the world, he accepted his mission of victim. He suffered in his soul every moment of his life.

2. *Its manifestation in his bodily sufferings.* The evangelists have set them forth in detailed accounts. There is no subject of meditation better calculated to move our hearts and strengthen our wills.

3. *The completion and extension of that life* in the penitential effects produced in Christians, who are members of Christ's body. He inspires us with the love of sacrifice.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we have viewed the priesthood as a participation in the state of victim of Christ. We will ask him to teach us to share in his expiations.

We will resolve:

1. To practice patience in imitation of Christ crucified;

2. Frequently to offer some voluntary sacrifice to God.

Christum regem crucifixum, venite, adoremus.

Adoration

Let us adore God, instituting, after the fall of man, the great law of expiation by means of suffering and sacrifice. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*[1] No great work is accomplished by man without laborious effort. The work of sanctification is no exception. Man has been lost by seeking selfish gratification; he can be saved only by self-sacrifice.

Hence every religion, both true and false, has had sacrifice as its central act. They all ordain that man must present himself to God with a victim. *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.*[2] There are victims of expiation, intercession, thanksgiving, imprecation, adoration.

Let us adore in our Lord, both priest and victim, the perfect fulfillment of this holy but rigorous law of expiation by means of

[1] Gen. 3[19] [2] Heb. 9[22]

suffering. *He is the Lamb of God . . . who taketh away the sins of the world,*[1] the only propitiatory victim that can appease God's anger; our great Mediator. He accepts all the severity of the immolation. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*[2] The prophet Isaias calls him *a man of sorrows.*[3]

Before thy cross, my Savior, I adore thy divine suffering. Help me to understand this mystery and give me a desire to participate in it.

Considerations

Let us consider the propitiatory life of Christ, our victim.

1. *Its source and principle are in his sacred heart.* As in the case of the other dispositions of his soul, the external acts by which that propitiatory life was manifested were but a feeble expression of it.

As soon as he entered the world, he accepted his mission of victim. He understands its full import and he joyfully submits. *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not: but*

[1] John 1[29]
[2] Luke 24[26]
[3] Is. 53[3]

a body thou hast fitted to me: Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come.[1] He looks forward eagerly to the fulfilment of his merciful design of our redemption. *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how I am straitened until it be accomplished.*[2]

Long before the time of his passion, his soul experienced grievous suffering and sadness at the perspective of the countless sins in the world. This feeling was more visibly manifested in the agony of the Garden on the eve of his passion, but he suffered in his soul every moment of his life.

2. *Its manifestation in his bodily suffering.* The evangelists have set forth these sufferings of the God-man in simple but touching accounts, which console us as we read them and meditate upon them over and over again. Time after time we have accompanied our Lord on the painful road to Calvary. We have contemplated him *as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim.*[3] After his agony in the Garden, we have seen him lacerated by the thongs of his torturers, crowned with

[1] HEB. 10^{5-7} [2] LUKE 12^{50}
[3] JER. 11^{19}

thorns, cruelly insulted, painfully ascending the road to Calvary where he consummated his sacrifice after three hours of most intense agony by dying on the cross.

Let us meditate on each of his sufferings and at the same time adore the justice of God. There is no subject of meditation better calculated to move our hearts and strengthen our wills. It was in the contemplation of these sufferings, before their crucifix, that the ardor of the saints was enkindled, that they generously determined to sacrifice everything, even themselves, for God and for souls. As the author of the Imitation says: *O if the Crucified Jesus should come into our heart,*[1] if, like those saints, we understood the language of the cross, what a transformation it would make in us!

3. *The completion and extension of that life* in the penitential effects which the divine Master produces in Christians, who are members of his body. Christ, present in the souls that belong to him, communicates to them his life as victim for sin. He inspires them with a love of sacrifice and gives them a supernatural desire for immolation and martyr-

[1] IMIT. I, 25[6]

dom. Not only does he bestow on them the courage to endure the trials of life, but even to impose voluntary privations on themselves, to practice penance and mortification. There is no soul truly animated by the spirit of Christ that does not feel the need of voluntary mortification.

When we suffer in union with Christ, we can say with St. Paul: *I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body, which is the Church.*[1] Thus our Lord's passion is perpetuated in the Church. The martyrs who pour forth their life's blood for the faith, the saints who have consumed their lives in works of penance, apostolic men who devote themselves to the salvation of souls; all those who endure the trials of sickness, persecution, and calumny, are the living continuation of Christ's passion.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, if thou desirest to see all men, animated by thy grace, participate in thy penitential life, how much more does this wish of thy heart extend to thy priests? They

[1] Col. 1[24]

are other Christs and consequently should be animated by thy spirit more perfectly than the simple faithful. Moreover, the offering of the divine sacrifice, which is their principal function, daily recalls to them that they should offer themselves in union with thee as victims for the sins of the world. The Church addresses these words to them at their sacerdotal consecration: *Imitamini quod tractatis; quatenus mortis dominicae mysterium celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis.*[1]

Have I heretofore viewed the priesthood in this light? If I do not desire to offer myself as a victim in union with Christ, have I at least sufficient patience and resignation in the trials that inevitably befall me? All pain is repugnant to our human nature. Only thy grace, my Savior, can teach me to suffer. I ask this grace of thee.

I resolve:

1. To practice patience in imitation of Christ crucified;

2. Frequently to offer some voluntary sacrifice to God.

Christum regem crucifixum, venite, adoremus.

[1] PONT. ROM.

III

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL TAUGHT BY THE PASSION

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord announcing to his apostles the trials he was about to undergo. They had been constantly in his mind during his whole life.

II. We will consider the two lessons which, according to St. Augustine, the Passion teaches us.

1. *Agnosce quantum valeas.* By our human nature we are the crowning work of creation. The supernatural life of our souls was purchased for us by the blood of Christ. As priests we will daily reproduce the immolation of Calvary and apply its efficacy to immortal souls.

2. *Agnosce quantum debeas.* The passion of Christ imposes on us the duty of gratitude, of sanctification, of profiting by his grace, of surrendering to him, and of preaching Christ crucified by word and example.

III. We will ask our Lord to teach us the lessons of the cross and give us the grace to put them into practice.

We will resolve to make our salvation and progress in holiness the great aim of our whole life.

I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord announcing to his apostles the trials he was about to undergo. *Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the son of man. For he shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death.*[1]

From the moment of his incarnation he never lost sight of his passion. Calvary and the cross were ever before him and he constantly renewed the sacrificial offering of himself to God.

He prepares his apostles for the trials that await them by forewarning them, making them familiar with the details of his immolation. And he teaches us all how profitable it is to meditate attentively on the mystery of the cross.

Hence, throughout this penitential season, the Church keeps the thought of the cross before our minds, a subject so well calculated to arouse the spirit of repentance within us.

[1] Luke 18[31–33]

Let us enter into this spirit and fix in our mind the sacred wounds of Christ. Like those faithful friends of our Lord, let us remain at the foot of the cross. *We adore thee, O Christ, and praise thee; because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.*[1]

Considerations

Let us consider the two lessons which according to St. Augustine, the Passion teaches us. *Agnosce, homo, quantum valeas, et quantum debeas.*[2]

1. *Agnosce quantum valeas.* By creation I became man, by baptism a Christian, by ordination I will become a priest. I am a being endowed with understanding and free will, capable of knowing the truth and of aspiring to what is good, with a heart that only God can satisfy. By these prerogatives I am distinguished from creatures of a lower order.

This testimony of my own consciousness is confirmed by the sacred writings which declare man to be the crowning work of the

[1] *Liturgy of the Church*

[2] St. Aug. Serm. **41**, *De Pass. Dom.*

Creator. Man's soul is a breath from God's bosom. He is the king of creation.

But above all it is the mystery of Calvary that reveals man's greatness. On the cross I see the real titles of human nobility. It teaches me that God loves me and that he died to redeem me. *He loved me and delivered himself for me.*[1]

Considering, on the one hand, the salvation and sanctification of our souls, and on the other, the sufferings and death of his divine Son, God judged that there was no disproportion between the two. *He . . . spared not even his own Son: but delivered him up for us all.*[2] What Christ did for all mankind, he would have done for me alone. *Agnosce, homo, quantum valeas!*

From every point of view, the supernatural life is seen to be of inestimable value. But this fact is emphasized especially by the sufferings of Christ; which merited it for me. To create me, God had only to speak the word. But to give me the sublime prerogatives of a Christian, he had to suffer and die.

[1] GAL. 2^{20} [2] ROM. 8^{32}

The mystery of the cross teaches me the dignity of the priesthood. As a Christian I am begotten in the supernatural life by the blood of Christ. On the same precious blood I acquire stupendous rights when I become a priest. By my ordination I have the right to continue Christ's immolation every day at the altar and to apply its efficacy to immortal souls by the sacraments that I administer. This is the essential prerogative of the priesthood and foundation of the sacerdotal dignity. As a priest I do every day what Christ did on Calvary, I renew the sacrifice of Christ which, in a way, becomes mine. Now there is nothing in the God-man greater than his priestly dignity by which he offers the sacrifice that alone can bring glory to God and holiness to souls. *Agnosce quantum valeas!*

2. *Agnosce quantum debeas.* Urged by his love, Christ offered himself for us, thereby procuring precious blessings for us. Words can not express the gratitude I should feel. The most ordinary favor provokes our thanks. Who shall measure the thanks due our Lord for the blessings that come to us from his sacrifice?

The cross also teaches us that the salvation

and sanctification of our souls should be uppermost in our thoughts, the chief object of our solicitude and zeal. Considering that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we will often repeat these words of one of God's saints: *I wish to save my soul.* And we will live in accord with that wish, subordinating everything else to it.

The Savior's death was the source of all the graces we receive. They will therefore be infinitely precious in our eyes. The passion and death of a God is their price. How could I disregard them?

Christ redeemed, purchased our souls by his death. Hence we belong to him. *Know you not that . . . you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price.*[1] And again St. Paul says: *Christ died for all: that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.*[2] I offer my heart to him and will banish from it all love that interferes with his; my will I submit to him in all things; my bodily powers, all my talents will be employed only in his service; and I am ready to lay down my very life for him.

[1] I Cor. 6[19] [2] II Cor. 5[15]

We will say with St. Paul: *We preach Christ crucified.*[1] And we must do this by the example of our life as well as by our words. *Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.*[2]

Acts and Resolutions

Divine Savior, make me docile to the lessons of the cross. In the contemplation of thy passion, grant that I may realize the priceless value of my soul, that the holiness of my life may correspond with the eminence of my prerogatives.

By learning the lesson of the cross, the saints have come to know, love, and serve thee devotedly. It was there they learned the rules of Christian perfection and at the same time derived the grace to put them into practice. I, too, wish to learn this lesson, to become a faithful disciple of the cross.

I resolve to make my salvation and progress in holiness the great aim of my whole life.

I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified.[3]

[1] I Cor. 1[23] [2] II Cor. 4[10]
[3] I Cor. 2[2]

IV

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

SUMMARY

I. We will contemplate the agony of Jesus. He retires to the Garden of Olives; his soul undergoes a most bitter sadness. We will compassionate him in his agony.

II. We will consider Christ as our model in the practice of penance.

1. *He knew the sins of the world.* The human conscience is an open book for him. We should try to know the number and gravity of our sins.

2. *He grieved for the sins of the world,* even the most venial. If our repentance is sincere, we must share this grief of Christ.

3. *He accepted to atone for the sins of the world* by offering himself as a sacrifice of expiation. In a spirit of penance we should accept all the sufferings that Providence sends us.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we have these three dispositions of true repentance. We will pray for this grace.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example.

Adoration

Let us contemplate the agony of Jesus at the beginning of his passion. With his dis-

ciples he retires to the Garden of Olives where, as he knows, his enemies will soon seize him and vent their sacrilegious hatred upon his adorable person. To prepare to drink the chalice which his Father presents to him, he advances further into the Garden, taking with him only Peter, James, and John. For these three witnesses of his glory on Mount Thabor were to be also witnesses of his agony. He foresees the evils that will be inflicted on him. *My soul is sorrowful even unto death,* he says. *He began to fear*[1] *to grow sorrowful and to be sad.*[2] His agony is so severe that *his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. Being in an agony he prayed the longer. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him.*[3]

Let us beware lest we imitate the lack of sympathy shown by the apostles on this occasion. Although witnesses of his agony and although knowing the secret of his grief, they permit themselves to sleep until, seized with fear, they abandon their divine Master to his enemies. Our Lord invites us to watch and pray with him.

[1] MARK **14**[33] [2] MATT. **26**[37]
[3] LUKE **22**[43]

Considerations

In the mystery of his agony in the Garden, Christ is the model of Christians who devote themselves to practices of penance that they may expiate the sins of their past life. This consists in the knowledge of our sins, grief for the offense thus offered to God, and a desire to atone for them.

1. *Christ knew the sins of the whole world,* of all mankind from the sin of Adam to the treason of Judas and even those that would be committed until the end of the world. He sees them every one, the most monstrous and the most venial, even the imperfections and weaknesses of the saints. By an anticipation, as it were, of the last judgment when the consciences of all will be an open book before the entire world, this terrible series of sin was visible to him in every detail.

The first effect of the grace of penitence is to make us understand the number and gravity of our sins. In our unenlightened ignorance we were not aware of our own spiritual depravity, we did not realize how our faults had been multiplying nor did we discern how serious they had become. But the grace of repentance discloses our sinfulness to us in

its true ugliness. *We have sinned . . . we have acted unjustly, we have wrought iniquity.*[1]

2. *Christ grieved for the sins of the world* so intensely that *his soul was sorrowful even unto death.*[2] It is true that now in heaven Christ can suffer no more. But in the Garden of Olives he was overwhelmed with grief at the sight of the world's sins.

His sorrow was caused not only by those crimes that bring death to the soul and cause eternal reprobation, but also by less grievous offenses, the lack of mortification, capricious fickleness, distractions and voluntary negligences in prayer, inordinate attachments, enmities, and such like faults that we meet with so frequently in our life and of which we take so little account.

If our repentance is sincere, we must share the grief that sin caused in the soul of Christ. This divine Master had not committed the sins for which he grieved; his soul was pure and holy. But we have sinned. *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.*[3]

3. *Christ wished to atone for the sins of the world,* to offer himself as the victim of pro-

[1] Ps. **105**[6]
[2] Matt. **26**[38]
[3] Ps. **50**[19]

pitiation to expiate our offenses. Though innocent, he undergoes the punishment merited by the guilty. It is true that, before the perspective of his passion, he permits his human nature to be frightened. *My father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.*[1] But presently, by a sublime act of love, he declares that he fully accepts the will of his heavenly Father to suffer and die. *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*[2]

If we possess the spirit of penitence, we will feel the need of expiation and sacrifice. We will understand that privation and suffering are the only means of completely freeing ourselves from the bonds of sin and of blotting out the stain that sin has left on our soul, of curing the wounds inflicted by sin, of recovering the fulness of grace, and of offering to God the satisfaction to which he has a right.

Acts and Resolutions

Repentance is the first disposition of one who wishes to be united to God. On this foundation all true holiness must rest. *Do penance,* said the great precursor to those who

[1] Matt. **26**[39] [2] *Ibid.*

came to receive his baptism, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*[1]

Have I a sincere spirit of repentance? Have I stood face to face with my conscience? Do I find in my heart true detestation of sin, without which I can not obtain God's pardon and mercy? Above all am I generous in expiating my sins by penance and mortification?

My Savior, model of atonement, thou hast merited for us the grace of penitence. Bestow on my soul the light to know my sins, on my heart a true sorrow for them, on my will a generous determination to expiate them by penance.

I resolve:

1. To examine my conscience more thoroughly;
2. To cultivate a sincere detestation of sin;
3. To welcome every opportunity of penance and mortification.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example.[2]

[1] MATT. 3[2] [2] I PET. 2[21]

V

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord being crowned with thorns. Humiliation is added to his cruel suffering. We will compassionate our outraged Savior.

II. We will meditate on three crowns: the crown of innocence, that of expiation, and that of glory.

1. *The crown of innocence* which was lost by sin. Man came from the hand of God crowned with glory and honor. We will deplore the loss of that crown of innocence which we received in baptism, a loss due to our own sins.

2. *The crown of expiation.* Christ carried it first. We will follow him, accepting all trials and sufferings as the only road to pardon and expiation.

3. *The crown of glory.* Our crown of suffering, if sanctified by the spirit of penance, will become our crown of glory in heaven.

From this point of view the trials of this life no longer appear as real evils.

III. We will promise our Lord to bear our crown of thorns courageously. We will ask the help of his grace.

We will resolve to bear without complaint all the trials that Providence may send us.

Christum Regem spinis coronatum, venite, adoremus.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord undergoing the cruel and ignominious suffering of being crowned with thorns. He had already been subjected to a painful scourging. The soldiers make a crown of thorns, place it on his head, and force it in with repeated strokes. The thorns pierce the sacred flesh of our Savior; again his blood pours forth. Humiliation is added to pain. The crown, which is a symbol of triumph and royalty, becomes a sign of infamy and derision. After having encircled his brow with this cruel emblem, the soldiers bend their knee before him, insulting his majesty and making him the object of their mockeries and blasphemies.

Let us prostrate ourselves before this outraged Savior to adore him, to compassionate his sufferings; to testify our love, and to thank him for all he endures for us. Let us acknowledge his divine sovereignty and ask him to reign in our hearts. *In the name of Jesus every knee should bow.*[1]

[1] Philip. 2[10]

Considerations

Let us meditate on three crowns: that of innocence which we have lost; that of expiation which we must carry; that of glory which we hope to merit.

1. *The crown of innocence.* When the first man came from the hands of God, he appeared in the midst of creation as its king. He lost the crown of innocence, but God gave us another through the sacrament of regeneration which purified our soul from original sin, enriched it with new gifts; for it made us children of God and heirs of heaven. It depends upon us to preserve it. Have we done so? What has become of the grace of our baptism? Have we not lost it by profaning our Christian character? If we have the happiness to keep our baptismal innocence, how often have we not dimmed its luster by sin and neglect?

It is true that our sins have been forgiven, but nevertheless we ought continually to lament them. The saints have bemoaned even slight offenses during their whole life; and the royal prophet declares that his sin is ever before his eyes. How can we so quickly forget our many sins, perhaps even grievous? Do we

appreciate the value of the crown that we received and that we lost by sin?

2. *The crown of expiation.* Let us contemplate Christ, the second Adam, carrying the crown of thorns, symbolic of poverty, humiliation, and suffering the lot of fallen man after his first sin.

As soon as man revolted against God's sovereignty, he felt his own royalty disappear. Henceforth his brow was to be crowned by the sweat of labor. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*[1] The earth would produce only thorns and briers. *Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.*[2] How man's earthly paradise was changed into a vale of tears by sin! Our first parent's crown of glory has become for us a crown of thorns.

On every side we see suffering and misery; poverty, with its consequent anguish; pain and sickness, the fatigue of incessant labor; the trials and sadness that embitter our life; grief appearing in every shape imaginable. Such is our crown of thorns symbolized by

[1] GEN. 3[19] [2] GEN. 3[17]

that of Christ. It is the indispensable condition for pardon and expiation.

3. *The crown of glory.* If sin has changed our crown of innocence into one of thorns, these thorns sanctified by penance, will become our crown of glory in heaven.

The splendor of Christ's resurrection is his crown of thorns transformed and glorified. For *ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?*[1] If we carry our crown of thorns as followers of Christ, we too will receive a crown of glory. Although in the person of our first parent we fell from grace, in Christ, the second Adam, we can rise again on condition that we practice his teaching and imitate his life. If we live in the spirit of expiation and penance, we, like him, will some day enter into the glory of eternal blessedness. *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,*[2] says St. Paul. *Yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.*[3]

From this point of view the sufferings and trials of this life no longer appear as real evils. For a Christian who regards them in the light of faith, they are precious seeds that will yield a rich harvest of happiness. By them we

[1] LUKE 24[26] [2] II TIM. 2[12] [3] ROM. 8[17]

are purified, we expiate our sins and offer an acceptable sacrifice to God. *For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*[1]

Acts and Resolutions

Our Lord goes before us bearing his crown of thorns which our sins have placed upon his head. He invites us to follow him. Not thou, my Savior, but we have merited this suffering, we who so often dishonored the crown of innocence with which thou didst adorn us. I will not refuse the crown of suffering but will wear it without complaint. If the thought of the sacrifices I must make, at times weakens my courage, I will gain strength by recalling thy crown of thorns and the eternal crown of glory that awaits those who offer their sufferings to thee in the spirit of sacrifice.

I need the help of thy grace. Grant that I may learn the value of suffering, that I may be ever ready and willing to bear my crown of thorns.

[1] II Cor. 4[17]

I resolve to bear without complaint all the trials that Providence may send me.

Christum Regem spinis coronatum, venite, adoremus.

VI

THE SEVEN DOLORS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the scene on Calvary: Christ on the cross between two thieves; at the foot of the cross his enemies and some friends also, especially his grief-stricken mother.

II. We will consider Mary's part in this mystery.

1. *In union with the eternal Father.* She cooperates in the work of our redemption and consents to the immolation of her Son. She does so out of love for sinners.

2. *In union with her divine Son.* There is perfect community of sentiments between them. This union is especially manifest at the foot of the cross. She suffers with him as victim and offers the sacrifice with him as priest.

3. *In union with the Church.* The Church proclaims that she owes everything to Christ crucified. Hence her devotion to the cross. Mary's grief surpasses all that we can imagine.

III. As we are called also to immolate Christ in sacrifice to God, we will ask Mary to obtain for us the grace to understand and love the mystery of the cross.

We will resolve to strengthen our union with Christ crucified.

Those five wounds on Jesus smitten,
Mother! in my heart be written,
Deep as in thine own they be.

Adoration

The presence of Mary at the foot of the cross and the grief that pierced her soul forms one of the most touching circumstances of our Lord's passion. His dying words entrust her to the care of his beloved disciple, St. John. The Church commemorates the seven dolors of the Blessed Virgin as an introduction to the great mysteries of holy week.

Let us recall the scene on Calvary. Christ on the cross offers his suffering and approaching death for our redemption. At his left one of the thieves crucified with him addresses him with blasphemous words. On the right the penitent thief humbly implores his pardon. At the foot of the cross one hears the insults and mockeries of his enemies, triumphantly hurling their imprecations at him.

But in that crowd are also sorrowing friends: Mary Magdalen and the other holy women who had followed the Lord during his public life, St. John and perhaps some other disciples who had remained faithful during the general desertion.

His blessed Mother is there, her glance turned upon her divine Son. The sublime majesty of her grief is calm and resigned but her desolation is profound. Let us try to understand the depth of her bitter grief.

Considerations

Hers is not the ordinary grief of a mother over the loss of a beloved son. Recalling the place assigned her in the economy of our redemption, let us try to understand her part in the mystery of Calvary.

1. *In union with the eternal Father.* Elevated by the mystery of the incarnation to the dignity of spouse of the eternal Father, she wishes only what he wills. She is in perfect accord with him in her thoughts, desires, and volitions.

God has revealed to her that the child she would bring into the world was to be immolated as a propitiation for sin and that only on this condition would the world be saved.

Mary accepted the part of coöperation in God's designs of mercy towards us. She consented to see her Son die in suffering and ignominy. This was not merely in the spirit

of obedience and resignation but inspired by a love for sinners that Christ was to redeem by his death.

God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son.[1] This is also true of Mary. The Bible exalts the mother of the Machabees for exhorting her children to die courageously. *The mother was to be admired above measure . . . who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day . . . And she bravely exhorted every one of them.*[2] How more sublime is the Blessed Virgin decreeing, so to speak, the death of her Son for the salvation of sinners!

2. *In union with her divine Son.* Between Jesus and his blessed Mother there is perfect community of sentiments. His soul is reflected in hers. Theirs were two lives in such harmonious accord that we may call one the echo of the other.

Nowhere is this more manifest than at the foot of the cross. While the incarnate Word consummates his sacrifice, she offers it in union with him and offers herself also. As a spiritual writer says, The will of Christ and of Mary were one; both together offered one

[1] JOHN 3[16] [2] II MAC. 7[20]

and the same holocaust: he on the altar of the cross, she on the altar of her heart.[1]

In all Christ's suffering, Mary suffers too. She shares every agony of his body, every anguish of his soul.

She is also united to him in the sacerdotal act of offering the sacrifice to God. She offers her immolated Son to God; in him, with him, and by him she adores the divine majesty.

3. *In union with the Church.* The Church proclaims that all she possesses is due to the sacrifice of Calvary. By the blood of Christ she has been sanctified and enriched with the treasures of grace, and will one day be glorified. *We adore thee, O Christ, and praise thee, because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.*[2]

Except for the Holy Eucharist, there is nothing in the Church to equal the honor paid to the mystery of the cross. This is seen in the love and compassion of pure and elevated Christian souls for Christ crucified.

Any suffering that we witness arouses our compassion according as we appreciate its extent and according as the person who en-

[1] ARNAULD OF CHARTRES, *De laud. B.M.V.*
[2] *Liturgy*

dures it is the object of our love. But who understood Christ's suffering as well as Mary and who loved him as she did? Her bitter anguish surpasses all that we can imagine. This is why the Church applies to her the words of the prophet Jeremias: *Magna es velut mare contritio tua.*[1] She is justly entitled to be called the *Queen of Martyrs.*

Acts and Resolutions

By virtue of my vocation, I am called to repeat every day what Mary performed at the foot of the cross. Be thou my model, most holy virgin. I will recall thy presence at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. And thus the desire to unite myself to his sufferings will be more generous and I will more courageously carry my cross in his footsteps.

Mother of Sorrows, obtain from thy divine Son the grace that I need to understand the mystery of the cross. Imprint on my heart the memory of his wounds that they may be a sacred reminder of his love for me.

> Those five wounds on Jesus smitten,
> Mother! in my heart be written,
> Deep as in thine own they be.[2]

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[1] Lam. 2[13] [2] *Stabat Mater*

VII

THE HOLY LANCE AND NAILS

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Ghost inspiring the Church to honor everything connected with the passion. We will recall the scene of our Lord's crucifixion: his hands and feet pierced by nails and, after his death, his side opened by the lance.

II. We will venerate these relics as instruments and witnesses of the crucifixion and as a means of grace.

1. *They were instruments of the crucifixion.* Whatever was sanctified by contact with our Lord's sacred body deserves our respect. After the cross, there is no object more closely associated with his sacrifice than the lance and nails.

2. *They are the witnesses of the crucifixion.* What witness to a fact is more impressive than some object actually connected with the fact itself? These relics vividly recall our Lord's suffering on the cross and the shedding of his blood.

3. *They are a means of grace.* The relics of our Lord's passion are more efficacious as means of grace than those of the saints. But we know what prodigies have been wrought by these.

III. We will venerate these holy relics. We will ask for the grace of becoming attached to the cross and of confiding in our Lord's sacred heart.

We will resolve to renew our devotion to the passion of our Lord.

Christum lancea et clavis vulneratum, venite, adoremus.

Adoration

Let us adore the Holy Ghost inspiring the Church to honor not only our Lord's passion but everything connected with it. Among these relics the first is the cross, the altar on which the august victim of our salvation was immolated; then the nails which fastened his hands and feet thereon; and the lance with which his side was pierced.

To enter into the spirit of the Church, let us recall the scene of our Lord's crucifixion. The executioners roughly seize him and extend his body on the cross. With repeated blows of their hammers, they drive the nails through his hands and feet, then raise the cross and fasten it in the ground. There our Savior remains for three hours, suspended between heaven and earth, held to the cross by large iron nails.

Meanwhile he pardons his executioners and accords his grace to the good thief. He confides his blessed mother to the care of St. John, suffers an agonizing thirst and the

anguish of being abandoned by his heavenly Father. After commending his soul to God and declaring that all the prophecies have been accomplished, he expires with a loud cry. Then *one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water.*[1]

Let us adore this Savior in the act of offering his divine sacrifice. Let us also honor these nails and spear which were sanctified by contact with his adorable body.

Considerations

The spear and nails are entitled to our veneration as the instruments of Christ's sacrifice, as witnesses of the crucifixion, and as a means of grace.

1. *They were the instruments of Christ's sacrifice.* Whatever belonged in any way to Christ, especially whatever was sanctified by contact with his sacred body, deserves our respect. Thus we honor the crib in which he was placed at his birth, the pillar of his scourging, his crown of thorns, the linens that shrouded his body in the tomb. For the same

[1] John 19[34]

reason we venerate the holy lance and nails. But they are more venerable because they were so directly connected with the mystery of the cross.

After the cross which was the altar on which our Lord was immolated, there is no object more closely associated with that sacrifice than the nails which fastened his hands and feet to the cross and held him suspended there; and the lance which opened his side. These relics were the instruments of the sacrifice of Calvary.

2. *They are the witnesses of the crucifixion.* The immolation of Christ on the cross is attested in three ways: by the evangelists who have left us detailed accounts of it; by the tradition of the Church who came forth from the open side of the Savior and cherishes the remembrance of her divine origin. In addition to these two witnesses we have the testimony of the blessed instruments of the crucifixion, namely, the lance and nails. They were providentially preserved from destruction and oblivion that they might be an abiding memorial of the death of the incarnate Word.

Of all the witnesses to any fact, what is more

impressive than some object actually connected with the fact and, so to speak, making it present before us? These instruments of the crucifixion bring to our minds the scene of our Lord's sacrifice. They suggest the rough cruelty of the executioners, the patient suffering of our Savior, the long hours of his agony on the cross, the shedding of his blood to its last drop.

3. *They are a means of grace.* Because of their connection with the immolation of Christ, they have become an instrument of sanctification for us. If our Lord's garment by simple contact caused a sick woman to be instantly cured, if St. Peter's shadow had such a marvelous power, if the relics of the saints, a piece of their body, some object which they have touched or which has belonged to them, work such prodigies, if a simple blessing of the Church transforms a common object into an instrument of grace, how much more venerable should we regard the relics of our Lord's passion? Ought they not to inspire us with a keen realization of the sacrifice of Calvary? May they not become for us an instrument of grace in answer to our prayer inspired by faith and confidence?

We can, then, by venerating the nails which fastened our Lord to the cross and the lance which pierced his side, share in the fruits of his passion. Such is doubtless the intention of the Church in establishing a feast in honor of these holy relics.

Acts and Resolutions

Grant us, dear Lord, that respect and veneration for these instruments of thy passion which they have aroused in the hearts of the saints. I have not the happiness of possessing them, of seeing them with my eyes, of touching them; but they are in thy Church, preserved as a precious treasure. And what belongs to the Church belongs to all her children.

Like the holy nails may I become attached to the cross, so that I may say with the Apostle of the Gentiles: *with Christ I am nailed to the cross.*[1] The holy lance opened the way to thy heart. May I speak to that divine heart with confidence in all my trials.

I resolve to renew my devotion to our Lord's passion.

Christum lancea et clavis vulneratum, venite, adoremus.

[1] Gal. **2**[19]

VIII

PALM SUNDAY

JESUS OUR KING

SUMMARY

I. We will recall our Lord's entry into Jerusalem amidst the enthusiastic acclamations of the people. He permits his divine mission to be proclaimed by the very ones who will soon demand his death.

II. We will meditate on the words of the prophet: *Ecce rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.*

1. *Ecce rex tuus.* The prophets had announced a Messias-King. Christ possesses royal majesty, royal authority, and royal power.

2. *Rex tuus venit tibi.* Unlike the kings of earth, Christ comes to us. He came down from heaven to live in our midst. He now visits us through the Church and the Holy Eucharist. By his grace he visits each one of us.

3. *Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.* He wishes to be loved rather than feared. His mildness was displayed in his public life, his passion, and in the Blessed Sacrament.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we receive his visits with gratitude, love, and confidence.

We will resolve to submit our minds and wills in all things to the rule of Christ.

Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.

Adoration

The Church at the beginning of the second week of Lent presented to our contemplation the transfiguration of Christ on Mount Thabor as an image of joy, the first fruit of penance. In the middle of the holy season the mystery of the multiplication of the loaves was a reward still more consoling. To-day by celebrating his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, our Lord discloses to us his coming into our souls, there to dwell and reign. This is the most precious recompense for our perseverance and fidelity.

Let us recall the ovation our Lord received. Palms and olive branches strewed his path as he advanced. In their enthusiasm the people spread their garments on the ground before him. Shouts of joy and triumph were heard on every side. *Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*[1]

On a former occasion, when the people wished to make him King, he fled. But now he consents to be proclaimed King and Messias; now, when he is about to consummate his

[1] Matt. 21[9]

sacrifice in humiliation and suffering, he wishes his divine mission to be acknowledged by those very ones who in a few days will demand his death.

Let us adore him as our God, our Redeemer, our Messias, our King.

Considerations

Let us consider the prophecy cited by St. Matthew in his narrative of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. *Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek.*[1]

1. *Ecce rex tuus.* When Pilate presented Christ to the Jews, crowned with thorns, he said: *Behold your king.*[2] But they, blinded by passion, refused to acknowledge his royalty, crying out in their mad folly: *We have no king but Caesar.*[3] In protest against this blasphemy, let us acknowledge Jesus as our true King, who alone has supreme empire over us, to whom we owe respect and obedience.

Christ is our King. Through the prophets the Jews had become so familiar with the idea

[1] Matt. 21[4] [2] John 19[14] [3] John 19[15]

of the Messias-King that, not understanding the spiritual kingdom he was to establish, they thought of him as a conqueror who would give their nation an earthly empire.

Royalty supposes majesty, authority, and power.

Our Lord possesses *royal majesty;* for he has received a name before which every knee should bend, and he is enthroned at the right hand of God. In heaven the blessed adore him, on earth the Church pays him divine homage. Even hell acknowledges him as its Master. Before him all other majesty is as nothing; all other glory is eclipsed by his.

He also possesses *royal authority.* Having been invested by his eternal Father with the right to command, he is the supreme Lawgiver. His word governs our intellect and his precepts rule our will. No earthly monarch may claim such authority.

He possesses *royal power.* Temporal kings enforce obedience by armed compulsion. Our divine King, although without an army, nevertheless has unlimited power. During his mortal life it was demonstrated by his miracles. And it appears still more striking in the invisible protection which he exercises over

his Church, against which all the powers of hell can not prevail.

2. *Rex tuus venit tibi.* The kings of earth receive their subjects but do not condescend to mingle with them. Christ not only receives our homage and hears our prayers; he comes to us.

He came in the person of the prophets whom he sent to prepare the world for his visit. In the fulness of time, moved by love for us, he descended from heaven, assumed our nature, and became like unto us. He lived our life, conversed with us, taught us his heavenly doctrine, and marked his passage by countless blessings. His goodness and mercy he showed particularly towards sinners.

Although he has returned to heaven, he still visits us: through the Church, in which he continues his life; and above all in the Eucharist, that device of his wisdom and love by means of which he remains in our midst and nourishes our souls.

He comes to each of us individually. What are the inspirations of grace if not his visits? When we are sinners, he comes to convert us; when we are just, to console us by his presence. Even when we fly from him, he overtakes us.

3. *Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.* Earthly

monarchs are characterized by grandeur and dignity. Their ambition is to make themselves feared rather than loved. But Christ says to us: *Come to me . . .Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart . . . For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.*[1]

Think of his gentleness in the crib at Bethlehem, in fact all through his life. What compassion for our misery, what eagerness to console us! For repentant sinners what gentle mercy!

In his passion his mildness is conspicuously contrasted with the cruelty and injustice of his persecutors. *And I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim,*[2] he says by the mouth of the prophet. And when subjected to outrageous indignities, *Jesus held his peace.*[3] For his executioners he prays: *Father, forgive them.*[4]

The Church celebrates this gentleness of our divine King in one of her hymns:

> Jesus, the very thought of thee
> With sweetness fills my breast;
> But sweeter far thy face to see,
> And in thy presence rest.

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[1] MATT. **11**[28]
[2] JER. **11**[19]
[3] MATT. **26**[63]
[4] LUKE **23**[34]

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than that blest name,
O Savior of mankind![1]

Acts and Resolutions

Jesus reigns in my heart because he has redeemed me, because of the authority conferred on him by his heavenly Father; and he rules there by the free choice of my own will. I should obey this divine King in all things and submit entirely to his sway.

Since he comes to bestow priceless favors upon me, should I not receive him with a grateful heart? Since he comes with such gentleness, should I not receive him with love and confidence?

Indeed I am not among those who say: *We will not have this man to reign over us.*[2] But has my submission to him been absolute, complete? Jesus, divine Master, do thou rule in my soul; may thy every wish be my law.

I resolve to submit my mind and will in all things to the rule of Christ.

Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.[3]

[1] *Jesu dulcis memoria* [2] Luke 19[14] [3] Matt. 21[4]

IX

THE FIVE WOUNDS OF CHRIST

SUMMARY

I. We will contemplate the five wounds of Christ and join with Mary and the other pious witnesses of the crucifixion.

II. We will consider our Lord's wounds as

1. *The stigmata of the victim.* The sacrifice of Christ is eternal. This state of victim is expressed in his body. He shows his wounds to his heavenly Father for our pardon; to us, to arouse our spirit of repentance.

2. *The marks of victory.* As a warrior is proud of his wounds; so our divine victor finds cause for glory in the wounds of his passion.

3. *The fountains of grace.* These sources of grace remain always open to sanctify the Church. The sight of them inspires us with courage.

III. We will realize that we should have a sincere devotion towards our Lord's wounds. We will ask him to impress upon our heart the recollection of them.

We will resolve frequently to think of our Lord's wounds on the cross, especially in times of trial and temptation.

Christum in cruce confixum, quinque plagis vulneratum, venite, adoremus.

Adoration

Let us contemplate the five wounds of Christ in his hands, in his feet, and in his side. Let us join with the prophets whose privilege it was to regard them from afar. *We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God. He was wounded for our iniquities.*[1] *They have dug my hands and feet.*[2] *And they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.*[3] *What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands?*[4]

Let us place ourselves in the company of Mary and the other pious witnesses of the crucifixion who heard the blows of the hammer driving the nails through our Lord's feet and hands, who saw his side pierced by the spear, and who received his precious blood as it poured forth.

Let us unite with the apostles who, after the resurrection, saw these wounds in the body of their divine Master.

In union with the Church in heaven and on earth, let us adore the Savior thus wounded for us. *See my hands and feet,* he said to the apostles when he appeared to them.[5] Let

[1] Is. **53**[4] [2] Ps. **21**[17] [3] Zach. **12**[10]
[4] Zach. **13**[6] [5] Luke **24**[39]

us reply in the words of Thomas: *My Lord, and My God.*[1]

Considerations

Let us consider our Savior's five wounds as the venerable stigmata of the victim immolated for our salvation, the glorious marks of victory, and the living fountains of grace.

1. *They are the venerable stigmata of the victim* immolated for our salvation. The sacrifice of Christ is eternal. It is continued uninterruptedly on earth and in heaven. By it God wishes to be glorified and to receive adorations, expiations, prayers and thanksgivings of all creation. Christ is, then, standing before his Father, eternal priest, eternal victim. And this state of victim and priest is expressed not only in his soul but also in this body.

The priest of the Old Law could not present himself to God in the Holy of Holies except with the blood of a victim. The eternal priest of the New Law entered heaven marked with the seal of sacrifice. St. John says in the Apocalypse: *And I saw . . . a Lamb*

[1] John 20[28]

standing as it were slain.[1] The marks of our Lord's sacrifice remain eternally visible on his body in the five wounds. They are a testimony of his immolation or rather its mystic continuation.

He shows us also his sacred wounds, those marks by which he wishes to be known as the sinless victim whose sacrifice has blotted out our sins and opened heaven to us. May they recall all that he suffered for us and arouse in us a sincere contrition for our offenses, gratitude to our Savior, and a desire to offer our sufferings in union with his, so that we may say in St. Paul's words: *I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.*[2]

2. *They are the glorious marks of victory.* The Sacred Scriptures represent the passion as a combat in which our Lord has displayed an invincible courage. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty.*[3] *He went forth conquering.*[4] After the painful struggle in the Garden, in the pretorium, and on Calvary, came the triumph of the resurrection. Christ rose from the dead as a victor over his enemies and ours: death, sin, hell and all the

[1] APOC. 5[6]
[2] GAL. 6[17]
[3] PS. 44[4]
[4] APOC. 6[2]

powers thereof. *Despoiling the principalities and powers,* says St. Paul, *he hath led them confidently, in shew openly triumphing over them in himself.*[1]

As a warrior after a battle in which he has fought valiantly is justly proud of his wounds, so our divine victor finds cause for glory in the wounds of his passion. On Calvary they were painful and ignominious; but to-day they are a source of joy and honor. The blessed in heaven celebrate his triumph. *Behold in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb standing as it were slain. The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and honor, and glory, and benediction.*[2]

3. *They are living fountains of grace.* We can apply to them the words of Isaias: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.*[3] Are they not the channels by which divine grace descends to us from the cross? Christ willed that his blood, the price of our redemption, should flow from his five wounds. These sources of grace remain always open to sanctify the Church and to distribute that grace to our souls through the

[1] Col. 2[15]
[2] Apoc. 5[6, 12]
[3] Is. 12[3]

sacraments, enabling us to participate in the merits of Christ.

The sight of these wounds inspires us with confidence in God's grace which he wishes to bestow on us through them. Says St. Bonaventure: "The soul finds therein all that is useful and necessary; it has no need to seek elsewhere.[1] "I have not found," says St. Augustine, "a remedy for all evils so efficacious as the wounds of Christ."[2] And the author of the Imitation admonishes us: *Love to dwell within Christ's sacred wounds. For if thou devoutly betake thyself to the precious wounds of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation.*[3]

Acts and Resolutions

We should have a sincere devotion toward our Lord's wounds. My Savior, at the sight of thy transfiguration St. Peter wished to erect his tabernacle on Mt. Thabor. With St. Bonaventure I would erect mine in thy sacred wounds.

Through the intercession of thy blessed Mother who was near thee when they pierced

[1] *Collat.* **7**
[2] *Manual. ch.* **12**
[3] Imit. II, **1**[4]

thy hands and feet and opened thy side, deign to impress upon my heart the recollection of thy sacred wounds so that, meditating upon them, I may find therein strength against temptation, comfort in times of trial, and progress in thy love.

I resolve frequently to think of my Savior's wounds on the cross, especially in times of trial and temptation.

Christum in cruce confixum, quinque plagis vulneratum, venite, adoremus.

X

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the chief details of our Lord's passion. We will contemplate our divine model and adore his mildness, his patience, his spirit of obedience and sacrifice.

II. We will consider Christ on the way to Calvary as our model on the road to perfection.

1. *The cross.* Christ receives it joyfully and regards it as the altar of his sacrifice and the trophy of his victory. Every Christian should generously carry the crosses sent him by God.

2. *The road to Calvary.* Without resting on the way, Christ ascends the mount of sacrifice. We can attain perfection only by the difficult road of sacrifice.

3. *Incidents of the journey.* Jesus falls three times under the cross. But he also meets with consolation on the way. To encourage us in spite of the weakness of nature, we have the consolation of divine grace.

III. We will recall that one way of the cross consists in meditating on this mystery; the other, in the active participation in it. We will ask our Lord for the grace to carry our cross generously.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

Adoration

Our Lord's passion began in the Garden of Olives in the dark silence of night. With the coming of daylight, a new mystery begins in noise and tumult, before a large crowd of spectators. By the treason of Judas he has been given into the hands of his enemies who lead him from the tribunal of Annas to that of Caiphas, from Caiphas to Pilate. He is insulted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and finally condemned to death. On his bleeding shoulders is placed the cross of his execution. Weighed down by this burden, amidst curses and blasphemies, he directs his steps toward Calvary where he is to be crucified.

Let us consider every detail of this sad spectacle. More completely than in the other circumstances of his mortal life, our Savior appears to us as the divine model of all perfection. What mildness, patience, and resignation! In his heart what joy, charity, and obedience! With what a spirit of sacrifice and love for us he endures his sufferings! Let us adore our Savior.

Considerations

After purifying our heart by penance, we must cultivate the Christian virtues by long and laborious practice and thus rise to the perfection of holiness. Christ on the road to Calvary is our model.

1. *The cross.* When the decree of death was pronounced against Jesus, the cross, which had already been prepared, was placed on his shoulders. He sees in this instrument of his passion, not the infamous gibbet of criminals, but the altar of his sacrifice, the trophy of his victory, the scepter of his royalty, the standard that would rally his elect. He offers no resistance; rather he takes the cross joyfully with his own hands and places it on his shoulder. *Having joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.*[1]

Since Christ adopted the cross as his standard, *Signum Filii hominis*[2] it has become the sign of the Christian and the indispensable condition of holiness. Every Christian receives a cross that Providence chooses for him, that he will carry until the day of his death. It is composed of whatever is hard and bitter

[1] Heb. 12[2] [2] Matt. 24[30]

in life, grief of soul as well as bodily suffering; some arising in himself, others coming from his surroundings, from the bonds that unite him to his fellow-men, from the duties of his vocation.

The first law of perfection for every Christian is to carry his cross courageously and willingly. If we seek some other practice of holiness in place of this one, we deceive ourselves.

2. *The road to Calvary.* Christ is not permitted to rest on the way. In spite of his failing strength, he ascends the mount of sacrifice. Sustained by divine power, at length he reaches the place where his cross is to be erected and his sacrifice consummated. It is the end of his journey.

After receiving our cross, like Christ, we must undertake a painful journey. The perfection to which we are called is placed on a mountain summit. Every virtuous action, every renunciation, every sacrifice brings us nearer this goal of our endeavor.

Supernatural habits of Christian virtue do not spring up suddenly. They must grow in our soul and become strong little by little by overcoming many obstacles and difficulties. The life of the senses must be gradually sup-

pressed and the life of grace developed. It must *bring forth fruit in patience.*[1] We can attain perfection only by the road of sacrifice, labor, struggle, and suffering. Christ is our model.

3. *Incidents of the journey.* Tradition tells us that Christ fell three times under the overwhelming burden of the cross. We know also that during this painful journey there were some incidents that brought him consolation amid so much suffering. For he met his blessed Mother, Simon of Cyrene who helped him carry the cross, the pious woman who presented him with a towel with which to wipe his blood-stained face, the women of Jerusalem who compassionated his sufferings.

This double circumstance of our Lord's journey is repeated in every Christian life. It is the action of nature and grace.

Nature is weak and easily falls. There is so much sadness, discouragement, lukewarmness, despondency, so much sin. But our Savior teaches us to rise again and continue our journey with renewed courage.

On the other hand, to aid and sustain us we

[1] LUKE 8[15]

have the grace of God, which never abandons us. It lightens the weight of the cross, drys our tears, speaks encouraging words to our heart. We recognize it under many forms. By its help we can carry the cross to the consummation of Christian perfection which is found only on Calvary's height.

Acts and Resolutions

My God, long ago thou didst teach me to love the simple devotion of the way of the cross. But there is another *via crucis* still more sanctifying, one that will last all my lifetime. The former is a meditation on Jesus carrying the cross; the latter is a real participation in that mystery. I wish to be united with thee, my Savior, in thy passion. Strengthen my courage that I may persevere. I will, by the help of thy grace, carry my cross generously, willingly, gladly.

I resolve to cultivate the habit of frequently making the stations of the cross.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.[1]

[1] Matt. 16[24]

XI

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the circumstances of the crucifixion. In union with Mary and the other witnesses of this great sacrifice, we will gratefully adore our august victim.

II. We will consider Christ crucified as the model of Christian holiness.

1. *Renunciation.* His garments are taken from him. He no longer touches the earth. He leaves his blessed Mother to St. John. In order to be perfect we must separate ourselves from all attachment to earthly things.

2. *Sacrifice.* Christ is nailed on the cross. The perfect soul must not only carry its cross, but be attached to it. That cross is made of all the sacrifices implied in the practice of virtues.

3. *Charity.* Christ's arms are outstretched and raised toward heaven symbolizing love for God and love of man. In like manner the soul who is perfect has an ardent love for God and desires to devote itself to the service of others.

III. We will recall the reasons that urge us to the practice of perfection. We will ask God for the necessary grace.

We will resolve to strive more and more earnestly toward the life of perfection.

With Christ I am nailed to the cross.

Adoration

Christ has reached the place of his sacrifice. He is stripped of his garments and nailed to the cross which is then set up and fastened in the ground. From the sixth to the ninth hour he performs his double mission of priest and victim, and for us he offers to God all the suffering he endures and the death that is approaching. Seeing that all is consummated, he utters a loud cry, commits his soul to his heavenly Father, bows his head, and dies.

Thus is achieved the great immolation announced by the prophets and prefigured by the rites of the Old Law. It is henceforth the central act, the résumé of religion.

In union with Mary, St. John, and the other holy witnesses of this great sacrifice, let us gratefully adore our august Victim, our Redeemer. Let us ask him to acquaint us with the mystery of his suffering and to bestow its grace upon us.

Considerations

Jesus on the cross is the model of Christians who have at length reached the consummation

of holiness by union with God as the fruit of perfect love.

1. What first impresses me at the sight of Jesus on the cross is his state of absolute renunciation. His whole life was one of poverty. *The son of man hath not where to lay his head.*[1] But on Calvary we see in all its perfection his complete detachment from the world. His garments have been taken from him. His feet no longer touch the earth. He still possesses his blessed Mother whom he perceives standing at the foot of the cross. He even separates himself from her, abdicating, so to speak, his filial rights in favor of St. John. No longer does he possess anything on earth.

The Christian who has reached the consummation of the perfect life ought likewise to be in a state of entire separation from all created things. He converses with men, makes use of temporal things. But in his soul the bonds attaching him to the world are broken. He despises riches, disdains worldly pleasures, has no ambition for honors. His thoughts and affections are above all that. This is the blessed liberty which the children of God are

[1] MATT. 8[20]

called to possess. Regardless of external conditions, we can all enter into this spirit of renunciation.

2. Jesus is fastened by cruel nails to the altar of his sacrifice. He is an image of those who, in the perfection of charity, are attached to the cross by the power of divine love. What is the cross for us if not the ensemble of Christian virtues with the sacrifices they necessarily imply? Is it not the symbol of perfect holiness toward which we must strive.

At the outset of his career, the disciple of Christ carries his cross painfully in the footsteps of his divine Master. It is the time of struggle between nature and grace, the time of temptation and trial, of falls and continual perils. At length comes the calm, because grace has triumphed. Clothed in the strength of God, the soul endures humiliation and suffering without murmur, preserving unalterable peace in the midst of trial. This is the reward of those whom God has found generous in his service.

3. On the cross Christ's arms are outstretched and raised towards heaven, thus symbolizing the disposition of his soul in the act of sacrifice—love for God and love for man.

He adores God and satisfies his infinite justice. His arms are extended to embrace all mankind, whom he wishes to save. This is the supreme purpose of the sacrifice and likewise the summit of perfection. *But above all these things have charity,* says St. Paul, *which is the bond of perfection.*[1]

Such a soul is united to God by the contemplation of his infinite perfections. Others know God, so to speak, only from afar. But the former easily and gladly remains in his presence, freed from the chains of earthly attachments.

Its love for God, without losing any of its fervor, begets within it another longing, namely, to devote itself to the service of others. Its immense charity embraces the entire world. In consoling its brethren, in drying their tears, in relieving their distress, and especially to inspire them with divine love, there is no sacrifice too great.

Acts and Resolutions

Few have the happiness of attaining this degree of perfection because so many do not

[1] Coloss. 3[14]

faithfully correspond with God's grace. But all are called at least to realize some of the traits which Christ manifests on the cross. I can not doubt that it is so with me.

Considering the dignity of the priesthood, my future mission to immortal souls, and, the graces that I receive, I am convinced that God has called me to the practice of perfection.

Christ crucified is my model. I must become like him, so as to be able to say in the words of the great apostle: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross.*[1]

Only thy grace, my Savior, can accomplish this great work. Teach me to love the cross. Grant that, after being a faithful disciple of the cross, I may merit one day to become its preacher and apostle.

I resolve to strive more and more earnestly, towards the life of perfection.

With Christ I am nailed to the cross.[2]

[1] GAL. 2^{19} [2] *Ibid.*

XII

HOLY THURSDAY

THE EUCHARIST

SUMMARY

I. We will visit the scene of the last supper. We will recall the chief events in the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

II. We will consider that the Eucharist is a summary of the Christian religion since it reveals Christ and gives him to us.

1. This mystery contains the person of Jesus Christ with his two natures and his infinite perfections. In the Blessed Sacrament he has all the dispositions of a consummated victim.

2. The sacred species are an image of the Church. The members, united by the action of grace, form the mystical body of Christ. They must also be transformed by grace.

3. The relations between the sacred species and the body of our Lord symbolize the union of Christ and the Church. He sustains the Church and through it manifests himself and sanctifies the world.

III. We will recall the great respect of the Church for the Blessed Sacrament. We will ask our Lord to inspire us with a great devotion to this sacrament of his love.

We will resolve to correct any faults or neglect in the way we assist at mass.

He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: he hath given to them that fear him.

Adoration

Caena Dominica, quando Christus Jesus, pridie quam pro nostra salute crucifigeretur, mysteria corporis et sanguinis sui discipulis tradidit celebranda.[1] With the simple grandeur of these words the Church announces the solemnity of Holy Thursday, the institution of the most august of our sacraments, so intimately connected with the great sacrifice that Christ was about to offer on the cross.

Let us visit in spirit the scene of the last supper. Our Lord eats the paschal lamb with his apostles. The Old Law is about to give way to the New Law, holier and more sublime. The eating of the paschal lamb is followed by the divine repast of the Eucharist.

Jesus, girding himself with a towel, washes the apostles' feet. He wishes to make them understand with what purity of heart they should participate in the banquet he pre-

[1] *Martyr. Rom.*

pares for them. He takes his place at the table again. His contenance assumes an unwonted aspect of dignity. He takes bread and afterward wine, blesses them with his eyes raised toward heaven, and pronounces over them the mysterious words that transform the bread into his body, the wine into his blood; he then distributes these to the apostles and orders them to do the same thing in memory of him. Thus the Christian priesthood, the sacrifice of the altar, and the sacrament of the Eucharist are instituted at the same time—all that is greatest and most divine in the Church. We have here the first ordination, the first mass, and the first communion.

Considerations

We may sum up the Christian religion by saying that it is Jesus, the incarnate Word, revealing himself to our faith and love, and giving himself to us through the Church. But this is precisely what the Holy Eucharist accomplishes.

1. This mystery contains really and substantially the adorable person of Jesus Christ. When the priest has pronounced the sacramental words, what my eyes see, what my tongue tastes, is neither bread nor wine; it

is Jesus Christ. How is this prodigy accomplished? How can our Lord, without leaving heaven, be present on so many altars? We do not know. But that he is present in the sacrament of the altar is an incontestable truth, an article of faith.

Under these species I adore the Word of God and his infinite perfections; the soul of Christ with all his treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; his sacred body and his redeeming blood.

In the Blessed Sacrament he possesses all the dispositions of a perfect victim. On the one hand, he adores and praises God, implores and thanks him. On the other, he bestows on the Church countless blessings and graces.

2. By transubstantiation Christ becomes present in the Eucharist; what was bread and wine becomes his body and blood. But the appearances remain and, like a veil, envelope the new reality. This is an image of his presence in the Church.

The bread and wine are formed of grains united together, making a new substance by their fusion. So the members of the Church, separated from one another in the world, are united under the action of grace and by their

union form a body which Christ animates by his spirit. Thus is the Church constituted. We are united by charity, forming one family of brothers in Christ. *For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread.*[1]

The particles of wheat and of the grapes must pass through a process of transformation in order to become bread and wine. So also the elements that compose the mystical body of Christ. After discerning, choosing, and separating them, divine grace transforms them. Evil inclinations must be destroyed in them by the practice of self-denial. According to the expression of the apostle: *that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*[2]

3. The sacred species, considered in their relation to the body of Christ which they conceal from our sight, are a figure of the relation of Our Lord to the Church.

In the first place, the body of Christ sustains the Eucharistic species. For they are deprived of the substance which in the natural order, serves to support them, and they subsist only by virtue of the body of Christ.

Secondly, his body is manifested by them. Although he is not visible to us, he takes, in

[1] I Cor. 10[17] [2] II Cor. 5[4]

the sacramental species, a visible appearance that serves to manifest his presence.

Lastly, these species are the condition of his sacramental action, we might say, the vehicle by which his grace is communicated to our souls.

Such are likewise the mysterious relations that unite Christ to the Church, so that the Church is called the mystical body of Christ.

He sustains it. The existence of the Church is no less miraculous than that of the Eucharistic species deprived of their substance. The Church subsists without the conditions that assure the maintenance of ordinary societies. It is Christ, her divine head, who has defended and protected her, guarded her from error, and rendered ineffective all the attempts of hell to prevail against her.

Through the Church Christ manifests himself to the world. Her liturgical feasts, her sacred edifices, the virtues of her saints, all the details of her life are a constant revelation of Christ and his adorable mysteries.

Lastly, it is through the Church that Christ sanctifies the world. In him alone is life; he is the only source of grace and holiness; he it is who purifies our souls, enriches us with

supernatural gifts, and leads us to heaven. But he does all this through the Church. It is by the mediation of a minister of the Church that he offers himself in sacrifice, forgives sins, teaches divine truth, and bestows his blessings.

Acts and Resolutions

In the whole liturgy of the Church there is nothing more venerable and sacred than the sacrifice of the mass in which the Holy Eucharist is consecrated. Every year she celebrates the day on which Christ enriched her with this precious gift. She wishes that a special feast should honor the presence of our divine Lord under the sacred species of the Blessed Sacrament. All the ceremonies are calculated to impress upon us how much she wishes the Eucharist to be honored.

My Savior, enkindle my faith, renew my fervor, inspire me with a most profound love and respect for this sacrament of thy love.

I resolve to correct any faults or neglect in the way I assist at mass.

He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: he hath given food to them that fear him.[1]

[1] Ps. 110[4]

XIII

GOOD FRIDAY

THE PASSION AS THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF SACERDOTAL MEDITATION

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord constantly looking forward to his sacrifice. He announced it by the prophets. It was always in his mind.

II. We will consider the priest as the minister of the passion.

1. *At the altar he continues the passion of Christ.* The mass renews the sacrifice of Calvary. But it is offered by the ministry of the priest. The passion and death of Christ should frequently be the subject of his meditation.

2. *The priest is the preacher of the passion.* This is affirmed by St. Paul. In explaining the doctrine and liturgy of the Church and in exhorting the faithful, he must regard the sacrifice of Christ as the very foundation of it all. It must be his familiar study.

3. *He dispenses the fruit of the passion,* which is divine grace, by means of the sacraments.

III. We will reflect that a priest who knows how to meditate on the crucifix is sure to be a good priest. We will ask ourselves whether we have a great fondness for this priestly subject of meditation.

We will resolve to return again and again to Christ's passion and death in our meditations.

I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal priest, who came into the world to offer his divine sacrifice on the cross. That was to be his great work, the object toward which all his thoughts and aspirations were centered. *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?*[1] From the very beginning of his mortal life he constantly looked forward to the cross. It was the holy law imposed on him by his heavenly Father.

The name of Jesus that he received at his circumcision, the myrrh offered him by the magi, the prophetic words that Simeon addressed to his blessed Mother, the title, Lamb of God, given him by the precursor, all called to mind the sacrifice that would end his life. He often speaks of it to his disciples and to the crowds that come to hear him. On Mount Thabor it was the subject of his discourse

[1] Luke **12**[50]

with Moses and Elias. *They spoke of his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem.*[1]

Let us adore our Lord thus accepting his immolation in advance, and with the deepest sentiments of grateful love let us ask him the grace to cherish habitual meditation on the mystery of his passion.

Considerations

In communicating his priesthood to us Christ associates us with himself in his life of victim and priest. All our ministry is related to this double life. It ought therefore to be the most habitual subject of our meditation.

1. *The priest at the altar continues the passion of Christ.* We know by faith that the sacrifice of the mass is really and substantially the same as that of Calvary. It is the passion of Christ renewed before the eyes of the faithful by the ministry of a priest, not in image or figure, but in reality.

By a miracle of his omnipotence, the Savior is present spiritually at the time in his priest and corporally under the sacred species. Thus in an unbloody manner he renews what he

[1] Luke 9[31]

performed on Calvary. As priest, he offers and immolates himself; as victim, he is offered and immolated.

Thus has Christ found a way to continue for ever in the Church the mystery of his passion. This he accomplishes by the ministry of his priests. They not merely assist at and witness the holy sacrifice; they are its ministers. They perform this miracle by the liturgical words which they pronounce. When at their word Christ, the immolated victim, becomes present under the sacred species, it is they who hold the spotless victim in their hands and offer it to God; it is they who elevate it for the adoration of the faithful, and give it to them as the spiritual nourishment of their souls. The passion and death of Christ should therefore be a frequent subject of meditation in the life of a priest.

2. *The priest is the preacher of the passion. For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified.*[1] said the great apostle. *We preach Christ crucified.*[2] This is the great theme of the Christian pulpit. All other subjects will lead to this one. As the sign of the cross at the beginning of every sermon recalls the central

[1] I Cor. 2[2] [2] I Cor. 1[23]

fact of our holy religion and the foundation of our salvation, so the great sacrifice of Christ should be at the bottom of all our teaching.

Would we treat the history of the Church? Its beginning was on Calvary. Would we expound Christian doctrine? The redemption, the fruit of the passion, is its keystone. Would we explain the symbolic rites of the liturgy? They are intended to represent the mystery of Calvary. If our purpose is to arouse in Christian souls the love of Christ, hatred for sin, zeal for their salvation, does not the passion contain the most persuasive considerations? Are not all Christian duties summed up in the precept to carry our cross in the footsteps of Christ?

The passion of our Lord must, then, be a familiar study for the priest who would instruct himself in the science of salvation. The more his preaching is derived from the crucifix, the more unction it will bring to human souls, the more fruitful it will be unto their eternal salvation. It is the source of all true Christian eloquence.

3. *The priest is the dispenser of the fruits of the passion.* In all the work of the ministry, in the administration of the sacraments, especially in the holy tribunal of penance, he is

dispensing the graces derived from the passion of Christ.

Our Lord shed his blood on the cross for the salvation of the world. It was to deliver souls from the bonds of sin and to communicate the life of God to them that he offered his divine sacrifice. Grace is the fruit of his death. In administering the sacraments, especially in absolving sinners, the priest applies this grace to the souls of men.

The priest has a double jurisdiction over the blood of Christ: in his right to consecrate it and in applying its efficacy to penitents. He hears the confession of their sins and, when he sees that they are repentant, he pronounces over them the mysterious sentence of pardon; at the same moment the all-powerful blood of Christ blots out their sins, reconciles them to God, and restores the right to heaven to them.

To fulfill that office worthily, the sacred minister must be animated by a profound respect for the divine gift that he dispenses and an appreciation of the enormity of sin which he is commissioned to destroy, and a love for souls that he is called upon to save. This three fold disposition is found only in a confessor who lives in the habitual recollection of Christ's passion.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, thy sufferings should be the habitual subject of my meditation. At the foot of thy cross I ought to seek my inspiration. It is there my priestly piety will be enkindled and developed. I will there find guidance and fructifying grace. There my zeal will grow more ardent and generous. A priest who knows how to meditate on the crucifix is sure to be a good priest.

My God, let this truth sink deeply into my soul. Since thou dost call me to the honor of the priesthood, grant me a great devotion to the mystery of the cross. Must I not confess that I have no great fondness for this priestly subject of meditation?

To-day the Church invites all her children to turn their eyes toward the cross and to compassionate the Savior's suffering. I desire to make the mystery of Calvary the chief nourishment of my piety.

I resolve to return again and again to Christ's passion and death as a subject of my meditation.

I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified.[1]

[1] I Cor. 2[2]

XIV

HOLY SATURDAY

THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

SUMMARY

I. We will assist in spirit at the burial of the Savior. We will adore his lifeless body and compassionate the grief of his blessed Mother.

II. From the duties performed by Joseph and Nicodemus and other disciples towards the body of Christ, we will draw a lesson for our duties toward the Blessed Sacrament.

1. Their faith was not shaken. They adored this body as that of their Lord and God. Although no outward appearance reveals Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, we believe firmly in the divine presence.

2. They embalm the body of Christ with becoming magnificence. The Church prescribes and encourages outward marks of respect for the devotion to the Eucharist. This obligation is especially the duty of a priest.

3. They place the Lord's body in a new sepulchre. So the Christian receiving communion should be pure of heart. The sepulchre was hewn in the rock. So our love should be strong, generous, and steady. The tomb is closed with a large stone. Likewise our heart should be closed against every earthly attachment.

III. We will ask ourselves how we have fulfilled our duty toward the Blessed Sacrament. We will ask pardon for our neglect.

We will resolve:

1. Every time we enter the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to make an act of faith in the real presence;

2. To be most conscientious in the care of everything that pertains to the altar.

I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house: and the place where thy glory dwelleth.

Adoration

The Savior, after three hours of cruel agony on the cross, died. While his soul went to Limbo to visit and console the just of the Old Law, whose hour of deliverance was at hand, his body remained suspended on the tree of the cross. According to the remark of St. John, God does not permit them to break his legs, as they did the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with him. But a soldier, to make sure that he was dead, pierced his side with a spear. From this wound, according to the gospel narrative, there came forth blood and water.

His friends then obtained permission from the Roman governor to take the body down from the cross. Mary received it in her

arms. Then Joseph and Nicodemus, doubtless aided by some other disciples, embalm it with precious spices, wrap it in a white linen shroud, and place it in a tomb newly hewn in the rock. The entrance is closed by a large stone. All except two depart. *And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre.*[1]

Let us adore the lifeless body of our Savior. And let us compassionate the grief of his blessed Mother.

Considerations

From the duties performed by Joseph, Nicodemus, and other disciples towards the body of Christ, let us draw a lesson for our duties toward that same adorable body in the Blessed Sacrament.

1. When the disciples take the Lord's body down from the cross and see it motionless and lifeless, their faith is not shaken. Enlightened by grace, they acknowledge it as the body of their Savior and their God. They adore it.

A Christian's first duty towards Christ's body in the Eucharist is to believe and adore.

[1] Matt. 27[61]

Although risen from the dead and living, yet it has the appearance of death. There is nothing to indicate the divine presence except the species of bread and wine. But it is manifested to our faith; and that suffices. Let us, then, like the disciples, acknowledge it to be the body of our God and Savior. Let us adore. With unshaken faith, we believe that, under these appearances, is the God of majesty, whom the angels in heaven adore.

2. The disciples place Christ's body in a winding-sheet. They spare neither care nor expense in testifying their devotion to their divine Master on this occasion. A hundred pounds of precious spices were employed. *And Joseph buying fine linen and taking him down, wrapped him up in the fine linen.*[1]

No doubt, if we had been present when the body of Christ was buried, we would have been eager to join the disciples in these last duties. We would have considered it a blessed privilege to show our respect and love.

But our Lord, present in the Blessed Sacrament, gives us every day a means to satisfy our devotion to him. Not merely by an interior devotion should we honor the mystery of

[1] MARK 15[46]

the altar. There should be an external manifestation of that devotion. The Church prescribes it, determining in detail the rules to be observed. Every becoming outward mark of respect is encouraged: flowers, candles, precious vestments, rich decorations. She requires a becoming richness in the vessels that contain the Blessed Sacrament, the linens that touch it, and the tabernacle where it reposes.

This respect for the Holy Eucharist is particularly the duty of a priest. He must see, as did Joseph and Nicodemus, that everything relating to the body of Christ be at least clean and decent. Conscientious care in this matter is a sign of true priestly piety.

3. The disciples' last office toward the body of Christ was to place it in the sepulchre. The evangelists have taken care to tell us that *Joseph . . . laid him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock.*[1] *A new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid.*[2] *And Joseph . . . rolled a great stone to the door of the monument.*[3]

The tomb of Christ is an image of the Christian who receives the body of Christ in holy communion.

[1] MARK 15[46] [2] JOHN 19[41] [3] MATT. 27[60]

It is a new tomb in which no other body has been placed, free from every impurity: *monumentum novum.* This is the perfect purity that should adorn a soul which is to become the sanctuary of Christ. If it has not the happiness of having preserved its baptismal innocence, at least it has recovered it by repentance. It must renounce sin, mortal sin which would make it guilty of profaning the body of the Lord, and even venial sin, which especially if deliberate, weakens our love for God.

Christ's tomb was cut out of the rock. Hence it was not a light, fragile structure.

To receive our Lord in holy communion, we should not be satisfied with a passing sentiment of fervor which soon grows cold. Our love should be strong, generous, and steady, with its foundation, not in our feelings, for these are unsteady, but in a firm determination of our will to belong to God.

He rolled a great stone to the door of the monument. After we receive our Lord, we should firmly close our mind and heart against outer distractions and attachments lest we forget the presence of Christ within. How many, after a few minutes of thanksgiving, no longer think of the great act which has been accom-

plished in them nor of Jesus whom they possess! Is it surprising that holy communion often produces so little fruit?

Acts and Resolutions

How have I fulfilled my duty toward the Eucharist? Have I imitated the care and devotion of the disciples on the occasion of Christ's burial?

Have I adored the Blessed Sacrament with a respect worthy of the divine presence? Have I been vigilant and solicitous about all that concerns the Blessed Sacrament? Above all, what has been my purity of heart, my love, my recollection when receiving my Lord in holy communion? Divine Master, pardon my neglect and carelessness and grant me a profound devotion toward thy presence in the sacrament of the altar.

I resolve:

1. Every time I enter the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to make an act of faith in the real presence;

2. To be most conscientious in the care of everything that pertains to the altar.

I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house: and the place where thy glory dwelleth.[1]

[1] Ps. 25[8]

XV

THE HOLY SHROUD

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the circumstances of our Lord's burial. We will join in spirit with the Blessed Virgin and the other friends of our Lord who were present.

II. We will consider three reasons for honoring the holy shroud.

1. *It is a memorial of our Lord's passion.* It received the imprint of his wounds. Thus it recalls the sufferings of the pretorium and of Calvary.

2. *It is a witness of the resurrection.* The bodies of the dead communicate their corruption to the shroud which encloses them. But it was not so with the body of Christ. This relic should inspire us with a lively faith in the resurrection.

3. *It is a symbol of the mysterious veil under which Christ is hidden in the Eucharist.* He is present in our midst in a state of apparent death, veiled from our eyes.

III. We will recall the devotion of St. Charles and St. Francis de Sales towards this holy relic.

We will resolve, with the help of God's grace, to impress on our heart the marks of our Lord's sacred wounds.

Christum Dominum, qui passionis suae memoriam in sacro sindone renovat, venite, adoremus.

Adoration

Let us recall the circumstances of our Lord's burial. He had consummated his sacrifice on the cross. His enemies had gratified their hatred and, seeing him lifeless, they went away. Devoted friends approached to perform the last duties for him. His inanimate body was let down from the cross, a hundred pounds of spices were used to embalm it, and a white linen shroud, bought by Joseph of Arimathea, was wrapped about it. It was then placed in a tomb newly hewn in the rock, where it was to remain until the blessed moment of the resurrection.

His body is without movement or life because the soul is separated from it. However it deserves our adoration. Let us join in spirit with the Blessed Virgin who received the body of her divine Son in her arms, Mary Magdalen and the holy women, St. John the beloved disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, and the other friends of our Lord who were present on that occasion. With them let us adore this victim of propitiation immolated for us.

Considerations

The shroud which enclosed our Lord's body in the tomb recalls his suffering and death; it is a witness of his resurrection, and it symbolizes the mysterious veil under which Christ is hidden in the Eucharist.

1. *The holy shroud is a memorial of our Lord's passion.* It enveloped his body and received the imprint of his sacred wounds. Even now it still preserves traces of his blood. In a way, we can see represented therein the marks of his scourging, the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns, the holes in his hands and feet, and the opening in his side. All his wounds have left their marks on the holy shroud. Hence it vividly recalls the bloody drama of the pretorium and Calvary.

I can not contemplate this holy relic without thinking of Christ's body which was wrapped in it from the time of his burial till his resurrection. It is the body of my crucified Savior. *He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.*[1]

2. *It is a witness of the resurrection.* It felt the first movements when Christ's ador-

[1] Is. 53[5]

able body began to awake from the sleep of death. It also felt the first effects of the invincible power of the risen Lord, who freed himself from this garment of death and left it in the sepulchre.

The bodies of the dead communicate their corruption to the shrouds, which soon crumble unto dust. But it was not so with the body of Christ. He was exempted from the corruption of the tomb and he has left us his shroud as a witness of his victory over death. The Church preserves it as an echo of the angel's announcement at the empty tomb. *He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.*[1]

This relic should inspire me with a lively faith in the resurrection. He is truly risen. This shroud that enveloped his body in the tomb attests that death, which had theretofore reigned in the world, has been overcome by a superior power. *The Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned.*[2] He has changed the shroud of death for a resplendent garment of immortality. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into joy: thou hast cut my sackcloth, and hast compassed me with gladness.*[3]

[1] MATT. **28**[6]
[2] APOC. **19**[6]
[3] PS. **29**[12]

3. *It is a symbol of the mysterious veil under which Christ is hidden in the Eucharist.* Christ, risen from the dead, manifests himself without cloud or veil to the blessed and to the angels that compose the Church in heaven. But to the Church on earth he is present under a strange appearance, a shroud in which he is hidden from our view, which permits us to see neither his features nor any part of his adorable body. Each time that the voice of the priest renews the immolation of Calvary on the altar, Christ becomes present in a state of apparent death. And under this veil he remains hidden in the silence and solitude of the tabernacle which thus becomes an image of the tomb.

As on the day of the resurrection he emerged from the shroud and appeared to the angels in all the splendor of his divinity, so at the end of time, when the reign of faith will be past, our divine Master, emerging from the Eucharistic veil, will appear to us as he is now seen by the saints in glory.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, at the thought of this blessed relic of thy burial, sanctified by contact with

thy sacred body, marked by the stigmata of thy passion, my heart is filled with devotion to thee. St. Charles, the great archbishop of Milan, often had the consolation of beholding this relic. And we are told that St. Francis de Sales also had a deep veneration for it.

In spirit I honor thy holy shroud and meditate on the mysteries that it recalls. It brings before my mind thy death on the cross as a victim for sin, thy burial, thy resurrection, and the continuation of these mysteries under the Eucharistic veil.

I resolve to ask our Lord to impress on my heart the marks of his sacred wounds.

Christum Dominum, qui passionis suae memoriam in sacro sindone renovat, venite, adoremus.

II. EASTERTIDE

XVI

EASTER SUNDAY

THE RESURRECTION

SUMMARY

I. We will contemplate the great mystery of the resurrection, recalling the precautions of the Pharisees, the eagerness of the holy women, and the empty tomb of the risen Savior. In union with the angelic witnesses we will adore him.

II. We will consider the paschal mystery from three points of view.

1. *In relation to Christ.* It manifests his power, his victory over his enemies, and establishes his divine mission. By it our Lord enters upon a new life in glory.

2. *In relation to the Church,* who is the continuation of his life. She, too, undergoes suffering and persecution; but she also has her days of triumph.

3. *In relation to each one of us.* It is the pledge of our resurrection; for Christ is the head and we are the members. It contains also the model and grace of a spiritual resurrection which consists in renouncing sin and seeking the things of God.

III. We will ask for the grace of better understanding the mystery of the resurrection and of putting its teaching into practice.

We will resolve to do all things in a more supernatural manner.

Surrexit Christus, spes mea.

Adoration

Let us contemplate the great mystery which the Church celebrates today. The Jews had gratified their hatred against Christ. They had seen him expire on the cross; and thinking they had nothing more to fear from him, they withdrew. Yet, lest the disciples might take away the body of the Master and pretend that he had risen from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees demanded that the public authorities should place seals on the stone that closed the sepulchre. Soldiers were then stationed there to guard the tomb. Thanks to these precautions, every possibility of fraud was removed and the synagogue could rest in peaceful assurance.

However, early on the morning of the third day, the holy women, eager to honor the Savior's burial, hastened to add new spices to those of Nicodemus. They were prevented from doing this the day before on ac-

count of the sabbath. But, they said to one another, *Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre*?[1] What is their surprise on arriving at the tomb, to find it open and empty! The soldiers had disappeared, frightened at seeing the angel roll back the stone of the sepulchre. *Fear not you*, said the angel to the holy women, *for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.*[2]

The great mystery had been accomplished. *The Lord is risen indeed.*[3] In union with the angelic witnesses of this miracle, let us adore the risen Christ and rejoice in his victory over death.

Considerations

Let us consider the paschal mystery in relation to Christ, to the Church and to each one of us.

1. *In relation to Christ.* The miracle of the resurrection was the greatest manifestation of his divine power, showing him to be master of life and death, to whom everything must submit. Thereby he confounds his enemies, establishes his divine mission beyond all doubt or

[1] Mark 16[3] [2] Matt. 28[5] [3] Luke 24[34]

pretext of uncertainty. The apostle Thomas, at first incredulous, at this sign acknowledges him as his Lord and God. And when the apostles come forth to proclaim Christ as the promised Messias, they support their claim especially on this miracle.

At the resurrection the Savior begins a new life. Not merely does he take up again the life of which he had been deprived by death, he is clothed in another life infinitely more perfect. Therefore, in order to carry out his mission as the victim of atonement, he had willed to share all our weaknesses, sin excepted. *Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren . . . that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. Tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.*[1] His body experienced the need of food and sleep he felt the weariness of fatigue; and he suffered most painfully at the hands of his executioners. And his soul, although endowed with the beatific vision, was subject to sadness and grief.

But after the resurrection that state of weakness and infirmity disappeared. His body henceforth exempt from all change, participates in the subtility of spirits. He passes

[1] HEB. 2[17], 4[15]

through the stone that closed his tomb as later on he entered the closed room where the apostles were gathered together. What was mortal in his sacred flesh has been absorbed by the new life. The grief and suffering of his agony, the cruel pain of the scourging and crucifixion are succeeded by pure and unalloyed joy.

2. *In relation to the Church.* We know that the Church is the continuation of the life of Christ. In her must be reproduced all his mysteries. He was persecuted; she will be also. He underwent the sufferings of his passion; she too will experience the same.

But Jesus triumphed, while his enemies ineffectually exhausted their strength against the stone of the sepulchre. So with the Church. Her divine Founder promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against her. Since the time of the apostles this promise has been always fulfilled. The life of the Church has been a constant struggle against the violence of tyrants, the seductions of schism and heresy, and the still greater perils from passion and corruption. She has passed through most formidable crises when everything seemed to conspire against her.

More than once have her foes announced

that the time of her dissolution had come; and, humanly speaking, they seemed to be right. But she always came forth from every trial glorious and triumphant. Her history confirms the promise of Christ, and will continue to do so in the ages to come. The grief that we feel at the trials of the Church, will not be the sadness of despair, as if all were hopelessly lost.

3. *In relation to each one of us.* St. Paul shows us that we must participate in this mystery in a double manner.

In the first place, as Christ rose from the dead, we too will rise. Like him, we will die; and like him come forth from our tomb to enter upon a life infinitely more perfect than that of our earthly existence. The apostle calls Christ *the first-born from the dead.*[1] Hence others are to share in the blessing of the resurrection. He is the head, we are the members. But the members can not have a life different from that of the head. This new and glorious life of Christ belongs also to us.

In this hope the Christian finds courage to endure the trials of the present life. *If in*

[1] Coloss. 1[18]

this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,[1] says the apostle. And he adds: *But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep . . . And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*[2]

This pledge of our future resurrection is also the symbol of a spiritual resurrection. Such is the teaching of St. Paul. *As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. . . So do you also reckon that you are dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*[3]

The whole paschal liturgy of the Church is a varied exhortation to participate in this new life. In consists in renouncing sin and the desires that lead to sin: *dead indeed to sin;* and in seeking the higher things that have their source in God: *alive unto God.* This is the principal fruit that we should draw from the feast of the resurrection.

Acts and Resolutions

The resurrection was the victory of Christ over death and hell. In every possible manner the Church expresses her joy in celebrating

[1] I Cor. **15**[19] [2] I Cor. **15**[20] [3] Rom. **6**[4, 11]

this triumph. She praises and glorifies the risen Christ. Should I not feel this joy? Can I remain unmoved by this victory of my divine Master?

As Christ's resurrection is the divine guarantee that the Church will continue to triumph until the end of time, I should possess an unshaken confidence in her, despite the storms by which she is assailed.

The feast of Easter offers me a precious grace, enabling me to imitate so far as our present state permits, the divine life of the risen Savior.

My Jesus, grant me a more perfect understanding of the mystery of thy resurrection. Vouchsafe that this day may not pass without some practical fruit for the good of my soul.

I resolve to do all things in a more supernatural manner.

Surrexit Christus, spes mea.

XVII

THE RISEN SAVIOR

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord whose life, for forty days after the resurrection, was both heavenly and earthly. We will thank him for thus teaching his priests that they should be in the world but not of it.

II. In the appearances of our Lord after the resurrection we will consider three characteristics.

1. *A holy purpose.* He speaks to the apostles about the kingdom of God, confirms their faith, consoles them, and restores their confidence. The priest should go into the world only for these same purposes.

2. *Seriousness.* He appears with the marks of his passion. The priest should appear in the world with serious dignity. He represents Christ, the divine Victim of salvation.

3. *Brevity.* Our Lord's appearances were rare and brief. The evangelists mention only ten. Rare and short should be the visits of a priest in the world.

III. We will recall that Christ remained in the tomb three days. The seminary is where we must strip ourselves of our evil nature and be transformed.

We will resolve:

1. To grow more detached from the love of the world;
2. To cultivate the habit of prayer and study, as a guarantee of priestly virtue;
3. In our relations with the world, to set before us always the glory of God and the good of souls

For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord offering us in his adorable person the most perfect expression of Christian life and especially sacerdotal life. During the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, his life is both heavenly and earthly: heavenly because, possessing his state of glory, he is no longer subject to the weakness and infirmity of human nature; earthly, because from time to time he appears to his apostles and disciples, talks with them, and takes part in their repasts. *To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And eating together with them.*[1]

This is an image of the sacerdotal life. Priests live and yet do not live in the world,

[1] Acts 1[3]

being men of their own time but also witnesses to eternity. They are part of human society, following its laws and sharing its life. But, on the other hand, they are strangers in the world and separated from it. They derive their inspirations elsewhere; they have other thoughts and maxims, other anxieties and interests. Though living in the world, they are not of it.

Let us thank our Lord for having called us to the priesthood to continue in the Church his glorified life. Let us ask for the grace to fulfill that mission faithfully.

Considerations

In the appearances of our Lord after the resurrection we can remark three characteristics that should be found in the life of every priest.

1. *A holy and supernatural purpose.* It was for no human motive that our Lord appeared to his disciples, not even to show his tender attachment to them. His only purpose was to speak to them of their mission, to found the kingdom of God in the world.

The faith of the apostles had been shaken by the humiliations of the pretorium and Calvary;

it must be strengthened. In spite of numerous witnesses, they still doubted the truth of the resurrection; it must be made evident to them. They were sad and dejected at seeing their hopes destroyed by the death of Christ; peace and joy must be restored. The recollection of the treatment inflicted on their Master, and which they might reasonably fear for themselves, made them timid and prompted them to remain in hiding; their courage and confidence must be revived. They were ignorant; they must be instructed.

Christ appears to the apostles to elevate them to the loftiness of the divine ministry. And he thus teaches his priests what motives should guide them in their relations with the world.

Far from us be the thought of frequenting the world to enjoy its pleasures and vanities, to take part in its affairs. Only the interests of God, of the Church, and of immortal souls should induce us to appear there. We have a divine mission to the souls of men. We are priests to strengthen their faith, to give them religious comfort, to sustain their weakness, to enlighten their understanding, to purify their stains, in short, to found the kingdom of God in the world. All our dealings should refer to this great end.

2. *Seriousness.* There is a notable tone of gravity in the Savior's relations with his disciples after the resurrection. The majesty that surrounds him fills them with a profound awe even as they rejoice. He appears marked with the stigmata of his passion, the austere reminder of the cross which they must reproduce in their personal lives at the same time that they spread abroad the knowledge and love of their Master.

The priest must appear, not with an air of giddiness and levity, but with reserve, self-restraint, gravity, modesty, and a certain majesty that is proper to the dignity of his character. He is at all times the ambassador of God. His presence should carry with it the thought of God and a veneration, not so much for himself, as for his divine Master.

The risen Christ bore the marks of the crucifixion. So the priest, by his whole manner of life, should preach the cross. In this way can we repeat the words of the apostle: *I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.*[1]

3. *Brevity.* The appearances of the risen Christ were rare and brief. He had passed three years in the company of his disciples, wishing them to accompany him wherever

[1] GAL. 6[17]

he went. He gave himself unreservedly to them. But once in possession of the new life after rising from the dead, he acted otherwise. The evangelists mention only ten visits of Jesus during the forty days before his ascension. He appears only so often as is necessary for the instruction of his disciples, and his visits are brief.

The priest's life should not be passed in worldly converse, in the tumult of human society. To be sure, the glory of God and the interests of souls will oblige him to leave his solitude. But let him be sure that such visits to the world are really prompted by God's glory and the salvation of souls, not by a desire for amusement and self-gratification. His is a life of prayer, a life hidden in God with Christ.

Acts and Resolutions

Between our Lord's death and resurrection, there elapsed the period of his sojourn in the tomb, after which he arose free from the weaknesses and imperfections of human nature. This represents the transformation that ought to take place in us during the years of our sojourn in the seminary.

The priesthood will impose on me the duty of reproducing the risen Christ in the midst of the world. Meanwhile I must be transformed into a new man. With my faithful coöperation, this work of grace will be accomplished here where I am separated from the world, as Christ was in the sepulchre.

My God, do not permit me to let this time of grace pass by unprofitably. In the course of my seminary life may I place no obstacle in the way of thy grace. Grant that I may strive each day to die more and more to the world and to myself, in order to live more and more for thee. Only in this spirit will I safely encounter the seductions and influences of the world.

I resolve:

1. To grow more detached from the love of the world.

2. To cultivate the habit of prayer and study, as a guarantee of priestly virtue.

3. In my relations with the world, to set before me always the glory of God and the good of souls.

For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God.[1]

[1] COLOSS. 3[3]

LOW SUNDAY

XVIII

THE VISITS OF THE RISEN CHRIST

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the risen Lord. He still bears the marks of his passion. We will rejoice in company with the apostles.

II. We will consider the conditions and blessings of his visits.

1. *The conditions.* The house in which Christ appeared was closed and the apostles were gathered together there. Our Lord will show himself to us only if we practice recollection and charity.

2. *The coming of our Lord.* He came into their midst and filled them with joy. He has also promised to come into our midst. This should bring joy to our hearts.

3. *The blessings of his presence.* He gives the apostles his peace, confirms their faith, and bestows divine powers on them. This is likewise the purpose of his presence in our seminary life.

III. We will thank our Lord for revealing himself to us here in the seminary. We will ask pardon for not fully coöperating with his grace.

We will resolve:

1. To live more and more in silence and recollection;

2. To perfect the practice of charity towards our brethren.

The lawgiver shall give a blessing, they shall go from virtue to virtue.

Adoration

The gospel of Low Sunday narrates one of the most remarkable apparitions of our Lord to the apostles after his resurrection. They were gathered together in the same place, with the doors closed. Christ appeared suddenly in their midst, greeting them with these words: "Peace be to you." Then, to prove his resurrection, he showed them his pierced hands and side. And he confirmed them in their mission, gave them the Holy Spirit and the divine power to forgive sins.

Let us adore our risen Lord. Although freed from the infirmities of our nature and henceforth exempt from the law of suffering, he preserves the marks of his wounds as a sacred memorial of his sacrifice. Let us ask him to impress the memory of them on our heart.

In his glorified state, the risen Savior does not appear, as formerly, indiscriminately to all, but only to his disciples. *Not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained by God.*[1]

[1] Acts 10[41]

He had chosen them to preach his doctrine; he had trained them for the apostolic life, he had made them witnesses of his miracles and mysteries. But, before ascending to heaven, he wishes to visit them again and to give them his last instructions.

Let us enter into their spirit of joy at the sight of the risen Christ. Let us make an act of faith in this great mystery, repeating the words of St. Thomas: *My Lord and my God.*[1]

Considerations

The seminary, like the house where the apostles were gathered together, ought to be a place where our Lord appears. Let us consider on what conditions he will show himself to us and what will be the blessings of his presence.

1. *The conditions.* The place where Christ appears is closed. *The doors were shut,* says the gospel narrative. Christ shows himself, says a spiritual writer, to those who close the door of their heart to the world and the flesh; to the world, by separating from it; the flesh, by repressing its desires and guarding the senses

[1] John 20[28]

from dissipation; that is, by recollection and mortification. Is not this our life in the seminary?

Here we live separated from the world, permitting ourselves only such intercourse with it as is necessary. We are strangers to its preoccupations and business, its pleasures and feasts. The tumult of the world can scarcely reach us. This spirit of retreat should be reproduced in every one of us. How? By living always in the sight of God, mortifying our senses, our tongues, our imagination, keeping our heart free from every inordinate attachment, so as to possess the gift of God in peace.

The second condition is that we be united in charity. *Where the disciples were gathered together.* Harmony had not always reigned in that little family which Christ had gathered together. There had been quarrels and ambitious competition among them, for which he gently rebuked them. But now they are united by the bitter regret of having lost their Master, and the desire to see him again. It is of him they speak to one another; he is the bond of union between them, the soul of their society. They live together peacefully like a family of brothers.

The seminary, formed by the union of souls consecrated to Christ and desirous of living for him, ought to reproduce the edifying life of the disciples awaiting the coming of the Lord. Charity must reign that our hearts may be united. There should be no place here for quarrels, animosities, jealousies. In loving Christ, all the members of the community should love one another, bearing patiently those defects and imperfections from which none of us is free.

2. *The coming of our Lord. Jesus came and stood in the midst.*[1] He came to console his disciples, dispel their sadness by his presence, and give them a new pledge of his love. *The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.*[2]

The same favor will be accorded us if, like the apostles, we remain recollected and united in charity. Then, indeed, Christ will abide in our community. We will not see him with our eyes, but faith will make his presence known to us. Without speaking of his Eucharistic presence, he will be in our midst by his grace, making his tabernacle in our hearts. *For where there are two or three gathered together*

[1] JOHN **20**[19] [2] JOHN **20**[20]

in my name, there am I in the midst of them.[1] We can say: *Indeed the Lord is in this place.*[2]

The seminary is a house where he wishes to dwell. We find him in the chapel, the refectory, the quiet of our own room. Wherever we go, Christ is there. *Jesus came and stood in the midst.*

What a source of happiness this should be for us as it was for the apostles. *The disciples therefore were glad.* What a power this recollection of the divine presence would be to help us keep silence, avoid dissipation of mind and heart, make us more serious and faithful to our duties!

3. *The blessings of Christ's presence.* When appearing to the apostles he gave them his peace. *He said to them: Peace be to you.*[3] To strengthen their belief in his resurrection, he showed them his sacred wounds. *He showed them his hands, and his side.* And he conferred apostolic power on them. *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*

Peace was the first fruit of his presence. Among the Jews it was customary to greet a friend by wishing him peace. But in the mouth of the Savior this wish was not a mere

[1] MATT. 18[20] [2] GEN. 28[16] [3] JOHN 20[19]

empty formality. For it had a power to calm their troubled souls.

Here in the seminary we have Christ in our midst, bestowing his peace upon us. If at the surface our soul seems at times to be troubled, we know that deep within is calmness and serenity. Thus are verified the words of the Imitation: *To be with Jesus is a sweet paradise.*[1]

Christ showed his sacred wounds to the apostles. Their faith had not been very strong. In spite of the testimony they had received, they believed only half-heartedly in the great miracle of the resurrection. But the sight of our Lord's wounds removes every doubt.

He shows us his wounds also; that is, he admits us to an intimate knowledge of his mysteries. A superficial acquaintance with our Savior will not suffice for us. In a variety of ways he is here made known to us.

Before leaving his apostles, Christ confirmed them in their mission. He confers on them the power to forgive sins and, to enable them to perform the great duties that will be imposed on them, he gives them the Holy Spirit. *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When*

[1] IMIT. II, 8[2]

he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.[1]

This is why our Lord gathers us together here in the seminary, the purpose of all our studies and exercises. Christ wishes to confer divine power on us. He wishes to associate us in his priesthood, to make us preachers of his word and dispensers of his mysteries. Soon he will say to us: *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*[2]

Acts and Resolutions

Blessed be thou, my Savior, for all thy mercies, especially for deigning to reveal thyself to me in the seminary. Thy peace abides here. And to help me fulfill the mission to which I am called, thou dost pour into my soul the abundant treasures of thy grace.

Have I appreciated the blessings of our seminary life? Have I, by the practice of recollection and charity, sought to retain thy presence in the depths of my soul? How feebly I have coöperated with thy grace! I ask pardon for these shortcomings.

[1] John 20[20] [2] John 20[21]

I resolve:

1. To live more and more in silence and recollection;

2. To perfect the practice of charity towards my brethren.

The lawgiver shall give a blessing, they shall go from virtue to virtue.[1]

[1] Ps. 83[8]

XIX

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCHES

SUMMARY

I. We will adore God everywhere present, who has willed that there should be places specially consecrated to him. The altars of the patriarchs, the Temple of Solomon, and particularly our churches are God's dwelling-places. We will make an act of faith in this truth.

II. We will consider the sacred character of our churches as expressed by

1. *Their structure.* The Church has wished that her sacred edifices should be as rich and beautiful as the Temple of Solomon. A new style of architecture was needed, full of Christian symbolism.

2. *Their consecration.* Nothing in the liturgy, except ordination, is more imposing than the dedication of a church. By the words of the bishop, God blesses, sanctifies, and consecrates our temples.

3. *The mysteries performed in them.* There takes place the union of the soul to God by prayer; there also the union of God to the soul through the holy sacrifice, preaching, and the sacraments.

III. These considerations will increase our respect and love for the house of God and confidence in God dwelling there.

We will resolve:

1. To recall God's presence whenever we enter a church or chapel;
2. To cultivate a special zeal for the care of the house of God.

Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord.

Adoration

Let us adore God everywhere present. Everywhere his providence accompanies us. Everywhere he hears our prayers and receives our adoration. The whole world where God is ever present and where everything reveals his divine attributes to us is an immense temple in his honor.

But he has willed that on earth there should be places specially consecrated to him which he makes his dwelling-place, where he bestows the treasures of his grace upon us more abundantly.

In the first ages of the world we find these privileged places which were religious centers for the people. The patriarchs, honored by heavenly visions in which God was pleased to converse with them, erected altars at those places where these favors were accorded them and there offered sacrifice to God.

Later on the Temple of Jerusalem concentrated the religious worship of the Jews.

There God dwelt and manifested his glory. *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts*![1] says the psalmist. *Thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord: the testimony of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.*[2]

But what was that temple in comparison with our churches? Are these not more truly the house of God? the dwelling-place of his divine majesty?

Let us make an act of faith in this truth. Let us adore God present in these august tabernacles.

Considerations

Let us consider the sacred character of our churches as expressed by their structure and consecration and the mysteries performed in them.

1. *Their structure.* God himself had given his people the plan of the tabernacle in which the worship of the Jews was to be performed. Later on Solomon constructed a temple on the same plan, but richer and more magnificent. Precious metals and rare woods were employed. It was justly esteemed as one of the wonders of the world.

[1] Ps. 83[2] [2] Ps. 121[4]

The Church, inaugurating a new form of worship, far holier than the ancient one, wished that her temples should be as beautiful, rich, and magnificent as possible. A new style of architecture was also needed to meet the needs of the Christian liturgy. Whatever may have been the beauty of the pagan temples of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, they do not equal the majestic beauty of our churches.

Moreover, the structure is symbolic in all its details. The form of the church is generally that of a cross, reminding us at once of the mystery of our redemption. If we consider other details of church architecture, we will find them symbolic of Christian truths.

2. *Their consecration.* When the piety of the faithful has erected a temple to God, it is becoming that it should be consecrated in order to be completely worthy of its purpose.

Except the imposing ceremonies of ordination, there is nothing in the liturgy more beautiful and solemn than the dedication of a church. To purify the new edifice the bishop several times sprinkles it inside and out with holy water. Then he anoints the door and walls with chrism. On the floor of the aisles the ceremonies are symbolic of the catholicity and unity of the Church. With anointing and

incensing, he places relics of the martyrs in the altar. By the prayers that accompany these ceremonies he invokes divine blessings on the church which he consecrates.

God takes possession of the sacred edifice and, in accordance with the bishop's words blesses, sanctifies, and consecrates it. Henceforth, separated from profane use, it is, in the truest sense of the words, the house of God. *Vere Dominus est in loco isto.*[1] Whether our churches be rich or poor, whether the architecture be magnificent or humble, to honor and love them it suffices for us to know that they have been consecrated to God, who dwells in them.

3. *The mysteries performed in them.* They are the centre of religious devotion. In them takes place the mysterious union of the soul to God by prayer, and of God to the soul by grace.

Union of the soul to God by prayer. To be sure, prayer can be offered to God anywhere. But the church is in a special manner our Lord's abode, the house of prayer. *My house shall be called the house of prayer.*[2] There it is that the sacred ministers, in the name of the whole Church, sing the praises of God. There every week the faithful assemble to adore

[1] GEN. **28**[16] [2] MATT. **21**[13]

the Lord, to thank him for his blessings, and to implore his grace.

In church everything is conducive to prayer: the religious quiet, the pious objects that surround us, the sense of God's presence.

The union of God to the soul by grace. Faith shows us the source of God's supernatural communications in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the mystical continuation of that which Christ offered on the cross for our redemption. It is on the altar that Christ renews that sacrifice. By the merits of his sacrifice he obtains for us, the members of his mystical body, the abundance of supernatural life. At the baptismal font we receive the grace of regeneration. From the pulpit God's grace enlightens our mind and his unction penetrates our heart. In the tribunal of penance it is grace that reconciles us to God. There before the altar we receive the supernatural nourishment that increases the life of Christ in our souls. There too we will be ordained priests of God.

Acts and Resolutions

These considerations should arouse in us dispositions of respect, love, and confidence.

Respect for the house of God. We should not behave there as in a profane place. God dwells there. Does not a becoming respect demand that we there adore God in great recollection?

Love. How many reasons we have to love our churches, especially we whom God calls to his priesthood! *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine virtutum.*[1] It is for us that God dwells in our churches. He invites us to go there to pray to him. They are the throne of grace and mercy. In all our needs let us hasten to his presence and there before the altar implore his mercy. *Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy.*[2]

My Savior, grant me this respect and love for thy dwelling-place and this confidence in thy mercy.

I resolve:

1. To recall God's presence whenever I enter a church or chapel: *Vere Dominus est in loco isto;*

2. To cultivate a special zeal for the care of the house of God.

Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord.[3]

[1] Ps. 83[2] [2] Heb. 4[16] [3] Ps. 92[5]

XX

SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the eternal happiness which God has in himself and our Lord's joy especially at his resurrection.

II. We will consider spiritual consolations from three points of view.

1. *The fruit of the passion.* Sin, the great obstacle to spiritual joy, was destroyed by the passion. The delight experienced by the devoted friends of God is the consciousness of grace; and this is the fruit of Christ's passion.

2. *A participation in the grace of the resurrection.* Christ shared the joy of his triumph with his blessed Mother and his disciples. We too participate in it whenever our Lord pours the unction of his grace into our soul.

3. *An anticipation of the ascension.* The resurrection was not the perfect consummation of Christ's victory. So our present joys are not heaven. But they are its prelude.

III. We will thank our Lord for the consolations that he has given us. And we will promise to strive to be more worthy of them in the future.

We will resolve to profit by the presence of spiritual consolations to advance more rapidly in the way of perfection.

How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee!

Adoration

Eastertide is a time of joy for the children of God. Such is also the keynote of to-day's office. The introit of the mass invites the whole world to rejoice in God's honor. *Jubilate Deo, omnis terra.*[1] And the gospel recalls the promise made by our Lord to his apostles that he would change their sadness into joy. *Tristitia vestra vertetur in gaudium.*[2] By this joy we understand, not the gratification of the senses as offered by the world, but the spiritual consolations which God gives to those who serve him.

Let us adore the eternal happiness which God has in himself. Thence is derived all our happiness. Our Savior felt this joy from the very beginning of his life. Neither his agony in the Garden nor the sufferings of the pretorium nor the abandonment on Calvary could take it from him.

But particularly at his resurrection his adorable heart was flooded with an ocean of divine consolations. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into joy . . . and hast compassed me with gladness.*[3] Let us unite with

[1] Ps. 65[1] [2] John 16[20] [3] Ps. 29[12]

the risen Lord to rejoice with him and share the ineffable consolations of his triumph.

He communicates his joy to the saints. Borrowing the language of the great apostle, they can say: *I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations.*[1]

Considerations

The spiritual consolations that God grants to those who seek him are not of the essence of piety; but they are its flower and fragrance. When they are withdrawn we must endure the privation of them with humility and patience; when God sends them to us we should welcome them with gratitude and live so as to be worthy of them. They are a fruit of the passion, a participation in the grace of the resurrection, and an anticipation of the joys of the ascension.

1. *They are a fruit of our Lord's passion.* It is by this mystery that sin, the great obstacle to spiritual consolations, was destroyed. Those living in sin are unworthy of every joy and consolation. Hell with its punishments is the portion justly reserved for them, and the remorse that follows their sins is already an

[1] II Cor. 7[4]

anticipation of hell. They are absolutely incapable of enjoying God.

But the passion of Christ has removed that obstacle. By suffering and dying he has destroyed the reign of sin in us, substituting that of grace and charity. Thus have his sufferings become a source of joy for us.

What is that pure delight which the devoted friends of God experience, if not the consciousness of divine grace that fills their heart, of the presence of the Holy Spirit within them testifying that they are in the state of God's love? This blessing is due to the merits of Christ, the fruit of his passion.

2. *They are a participation in the grace of the resurrection.* Our Savior's soul is full of joy. Grief and suffering has disappeared. *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.*[1]

But he does not wish to enjoy the happiness of his resurrection alone. He desires that his blessed Mother and his disciples, in fact all those who have compassionated his suffering, should share the joy of his triumph. *The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.*[2]

[1] Ps. **93**[19] [2] John **20**[20]

What he did for his blessed Mother and his apostles, he continues to do for the members of the Church by making them participate in the joy of his resurrection. We share in it whenever, during a devout prayer or meditation, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, a thanksgiving after communion, Jesus pours upon our soul the unction of his grace, making us feel his presence in our heart. This is particularly true when we celebrate his glorious resurrection. The special grace of the paschal mystery is a grace of joy. In the feast of Easter, more than at any other time, the Church rejoices. This is evident from the words that she places on our lips to celebrate the triumph of the risen Savior. *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exsultemus et laetemur in ea.*

3. *Spiritual consolations are an anticipation of the joys of the ascension.* However great may be the joys vouchsafed to us on earth, they are not heaven, just as the mystery of the resurrection was not the perfect consummation of Christ's victory. But they are related to the happiness of the next life as the dawn is to the full day. And they are a pledge thereof, giving us, as it were, a foretaste of what God has in store for us.

The risen Christ is still on earth. But he is approaching the hour when he will return to his heavenly Father and he already anticipates his eternal bliss.

His devoted followers are still subjected to the trials of the present life. But the interior peace and happiness which they feel when God visits them, shows them in perspective the end of the labors and the glorious reward of their trials. This hope sustains their courage and gives them a new strength to help them carry their cross in the footsteps of their divine Master.

Acts and Resolutions

My God, thou dost dispense natural joys and consolations to all thy creatures, both friends and enemies, the good and the wicked. But this is not true of spiritual joys and consolations. These are the exclusive privilege of those who love thee, who renounce earthly gratifications in order to possess thee more perfectly. If at times, to try them, thou dost permit them to suffer grief and desolation, thou wilt compensate them by still more glorious treasures of thy grace. Although at

the surface they may be troubled, yet they never entirely lose the joy of thy presence.

Henceforth, by renouncing the false pleasures of earth, I will strive to be more worthy of thy spiritual joys. I will receive them gratefully. But even when deprived of them, I will continue to serve thee faithfully and courageously.

I resolve to profit by the presence of spiritual consolations to advance more rapidly in the way of perfection.

How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee![1]

[1] Ps. 30[20]

XXI

EXTERNAL JOY

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the purity and holiness of our Lord's joy in his resurrection. He inspires his disciples with the same disdain for earthly joys. We will adore the Holy Ghost inspiring holy souls to flee from worldly gratifications.

II. We will consider three evil effects of external joy opposed to the fruit of interior joy.

1. Interior joy helps us to be recollected and prepares us for meditation. But worldly joy causes tumult and distraction in the soul.

2. Spiritual joy gives new strength to our will. But worldly joy weakens it. Love of pleasure never inspired great resolves. The saints were men of mortification.

3. Spiritual joy is the fruit of the presence of the Holy Ghost within us. But the joy of the senses is seldom without spiritual danger. Hence the remorse that so often follows.

III. We will confess that we have not always resisted the attraction of worldly joy. We will ask God for the necessary grace.

We will resolve to deprive ourselves of earthly pleasures from time to time as a practice of mortification.

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.

Adoration

Let us adore the purity and holiness of our Lord's joy in his resurrection. It has nothing in common with the joy that we derive from creatures. The characteristic of Christ's life after the resurrection is separation from the external world. His sole joy is in his heavenly Father; it is the joy of paradise.

Let us contemplate this separation from all pleasure of the senses. Our Lord rejects the vain gratifications of self-love, the base pleasures of human nature.

He also inspires his disciples with the same disdain for earthly joys. To-day's gospel gives us a remarkable example. Our Lord declares: *If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you.*[1] According to the common opinion of the Fathers and interpreters, if separation from the Savior was necessary for the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is because the apostles' attachment to their divine Master was too human. "Being too much given to human converse with Christ and to his bodily presence, they were not capable of receiving the Holy Ghost and his spiritual gifts."[2]

[1] John 16[7] [2] Corn. a Lapide in *Joan.* 16

Those initiated to the secrets of the spiritual life not only do not seek the pleasures of the senses but, knowing that these are obstacles to the communication of God's Spirit, they flee from them. If they must experience these pleasures, interiorly they remain detached from such gratification. Hence in the eyes of the world, which judges by appearances, their life appears sad and gloomy. But in reality, in place of the grosser pleasures which they renounce, the saints enjoy in the depth of their heart delights infinitely superior to those which the world can offer.

Let us ask our Lord to detach our hearts from the false joys of the world and enable us to relish those more perfect joys that he desires to bestow upon us.

Considerations

The pursuit of external joys is capable of producing three evil effects. These are opposed to three fruits of holiness that come from interior joy.

1. Interior joy helps us to be recollected and prepares us for meditation. For it draws us towards God and enables us to contemplate

him without effort. That is the best preparation for meditation and the most effective safeguard against distractions.

But worldly joy produces a contrary effect. In place of calm and interior peace, it causes tumult and dissipation, countless vain imaginations and distractions. We are unable to recollect ourselves in God's presence, to converse with him, or to hear his word. Thus we lose all fondness for prayer and spiritual exercises. We meditate without attention and receive communion without devotion. Seeking to gratify ourselves by the pleasures of the senses, we are incapable of relishing the consolations of God.

2. Spiritual joy gives new strength to our will. Penetrated by the consciousness of God's presence, we feel the courage of great undertakings and no sacrifice seems difficult. When do we feel most fervent, most devoted to God's service, most generous in our duties? Is it not when we experience God's consolations?

But it is not so with external joys. Instead of strengthening our will, they weaken it and make it incapable of the generous efforts required for the practice of virtue. The more

eagerly we seek these joys, the more we feel our devotion to God's service growing weak. Our courage to overcome the obstacles in the path of duty, to combat temptation, and to endure the trials of life is enfeebled. Every real virtue is founded on sacrifice. But sacrifice implies the renouncement of earthly joy.

Worldly wisdom itself acknowledges that the love of pleasure has never inspired great resolves. Is not this truth confirmed by every-day experience? The saints, those courageous heroes of God, were men who practiced mortification, who disdained the gratification of the senses. Whereas pleasure-seekers have never risen to the height of great virtue. If to-day great and noble characters have become so rare, is it not due to the love of pleasure that marks our age?

3. Spiritual joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence within us, the consciousness of our union with him.

But external joy of the senses results from the union of our soul to creatures in which we seek our happiness. And this pursuit of worldly pleasure is seldom without spiritual peril. It is some charm that allures us and leads

us to evil. How hard it is to remain within the limits of moderation, to avoid guilty excess, to keep our intention pure and supernatural? Hence the remorse that so often follows.

The need of withdrawing ourselves from external things is felt whenever we wish to keep our heart in a state of more perfect purity as, for example, before communion. This explains why those who seek the life of perfection deny themselves even the legitimate pleasures of this world.

Acts and Resolutions

Often, my God, has experience shown me the vanity of earthly pleasures and the dangers to which I am exposed in their pursuit. It has also made me realize how difficult it is to resist their attraction. Only thy grace, my Savior, can give me the necessary strength for the combat. Do not refuse it. Give courage to my will which is always so weak in the presence of sacrifice. To make me feel a disdain for the vain satisfactions that human nature craves, grant me the pure joy of thy divine consolations.

I resolve to deprive myself of earthly

pleasures from time to time as a practice of mortification.

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.[1]

[1] JOHN 2[15]

XXII

ROGATION DAYS

EFFICACY OF PRAYER

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord, the perfect model of Christian prayer. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church prays continually. But the Rogation days are times when she prays more intensely.

II. We will consider three reasons that demonstrate the efficacity of Christian prayer.

1. *Holy Writ.* We have the example of Moses, Aaron, Josue and others in the old Testament. The New Testament is still more explicit.

2. *The history of the Church.* It was prayer that fructified the zeal of the apostles, triumphed over persecution, and obtained so many graces in the temporal and spiritual order.

3. *The nature of prayer.* God hears this cry of a soul in distress. By the communion of saints, when we pray, all the just pray with us. And Christ prays in us. But his prayer is always efficacious.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we have a proper esteem for the power of prayer, whether we regard it as our chief activity in the supernatural order.

We will resolve to have recourse to prayer in our temptations, doubts and weaknesses.

We will give ourselves continually to prayer.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord, the perfect model of Christian prayer. *Who in the days of his flesh with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence.*[1] But he prays also in heaven. *Always living to make intercession for us.*[2] And he prays in the Church. *God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father.*[3]

Inspired by the Spirit of God, the Church prays continually. Prayer is for her what breath is for the body, an essential condition of life and activity. She prays by the mouth of the faithful, who form a society in which prayer is the principal bond of union. She prays in those numerous religious families, whose members, in the practice of contemplation, lead an angelic life, day and night offering to God the acceptable incense of prayer. But above all she prays through her priesthood established especially to fulfill, in her name, the religious duties that are imposed on all Christians.

[1] Heb. 5[7] [2] Heb. 7[25] [3] Gal. 4[6]

The prayer of the Church is uninterrupted, although at certain times it is more intense than at others. Such are the Rogation days when the Church invites her children to unite with her in solemn supplication for divine protection. On these occasions she prescribes the Litany of the Saints and directs us to make our prayers more efficacious by practices of penance.

Considerations

Often our prayers lack confidence. We are scarcely convinced that the cry of our heart can ascend to heaven and bring down God's grace. Let us consider three reasons that demonstrate the efficacy of Christian prayer.

1. *Holy Writ.* Almost every page of the Old Testament proclaims this truth. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the most High behold.*[1] And the psalmist says: *The Lord will hear me when I shall cry unto him.*[2] And again: *They cried to the Lord in their affliction: and he delivered them out of their distresses.*[3] *Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with*

[1] Ecclus. 35[21] [2] Ps. 4[4] [3] Ps. 106[13]

perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord.[1]

The texts are confirmed by facts. Thus we read in the book of Exodus: *Moses besought the Lord . . . And the Lord was appeased. from doing the evil which he had spoken against his people.*[2] In another place it is Aaron who obtains a similar grace in favor of his people. *Aaron offered incense: and standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people and the plague ceased.*[3]

Most of the miracles by which God delivered the Jews in the course of their history were in answer to prayer. This is notably so in the case of those obtained by the ministry of Josue, Samuel, Judith, Esther, Daniel and the Machabees.

We read in the epistle of St. James: *Elias was a man passible like unto us; and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again: and the heaven gave rain.*[4]

The New Testament is still more explicit. Here it is Truth itself affirming many times, in a most absolute way, the efficacy and power

[1] JUDITH 4[12] [2] EX. 32[14] [3] NUM. 16[48] [4] JAS. 5[17]

of prayer. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.*[1] *Whatsoever you ask when ye pray believe that you shall receive.*[2] *Whatsoever we shall ask,* says St. John, *we shall receive of him.*[3] And in another place the same apostle says: *We know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask.*[4] What truth of our holy religion is more clearly attested?

2. *The history of the Church.* It was the prayer of the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem that brought down the Holy Ghost and thus founded the Church. Prayer delivered St. Peter from prison where the tyrant Herod was keeping him. It was prayer that fructified the apostolic labors of Christ's disciples.

If the Church has triumphed over persecution, heresy, and all the attacks to which she has been subjected, we know it is due to her unceasing and confident prayer.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the graces obtained by prayer, both in the spiritual and the temporal order. The lives of the saints give us countless examples.

[1] MATTH. **7**[7] [2] MARK **11**[24] [3] I JOHN **3**[22]
[4] I JOHN **5**[15]

By the fervor of their prayers the saints, while still on earth, became, so to speak, the depositaries of God's power. In a more perfect manner, they are so in heaven in favor of those who implore their intercession with the same fervor and confidence.

Our own times abound in striking evidences of the efficacy of prayer, both by miracles, which conspicuously manifest God's protection, and by those hidden graces which are still more precious.

3. *The nature of prayer.* Though prayer were only the cry of a soul in distress, imploring God's help, would it not be efficacious? God who hears it is goodness itself. He loves and watches over the souls of men. He wishes their salvation. Would he, then, refuse to come to their aid when they implore him?

But Christian prayer is more than this. The doctrine of the communion of saints teaches us that all those united to God by charity, both in heaven and on earth, form a society in which, when one prays, all pray with him.

All the saints and angels, even the Blessed Virgin, take part therein. When, by the inspiration of grace, I have recourse to prayer

in my necessities, my voice is mingled with theirs. What I ask of God, the Church militant and triumphant asks with me. As we say at the end of the preface: *Cum quibus et nostras voces ut admitti jubeas deprecamur.*

But Christ is the soul of this society which constitutes the Church. When I pray the Church prays with me. But the prayer of the Church is the prayer of Christ. For she prays only in him and by him. Can we for a moment suppose that the prayer of Christ is not heard? This is the supreme reason for our confidence in prayer.

Acts and Resolutions

The power of prayer is incontestable. But it is understood by so few. How many priests, even among those who have God's glory and the salvation of souls at heart, have not a proper esteem for this part of their sacred ministry? Some there are who understand that it is the first duty of their sacerdotal life; and that is why they are holy priests.

Have I a practical appreciation of this fundamental truth? Do I firmly believe in the fruitfulness of the prayer of a good priest?

Am I convinced that a priest does more for the Church and God's glory by a devout meditation, the pious recitation of the breviary, a thanksgiving, or a fervent visit to the Blessed Sacrament, than by an eloquent sermon or other work of zeal?

Is my life in the seminary a life of prayer? Have I recourse to prayer in all my needs? Do I realize that by my state of life I am obliged to pray also for others, in particular for those whom I have promised to remember before God?

Grant, my Savior, that my whole life may be prayerful, that I may always remain recollected, fervent, and confident in prayer.

I resolve to have recourse to prayer in my temptations, doubts, and weaknesses.

We will give ourselves continually to prayer.[1]

[1] Acts 6[4]

XXIII

THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

SUMMARY

I. Let us contemplate and adore our Lord praying in the Garden of Olives.

II. We will consider three precious blessings which the prayer of Christ produces for us.

1. *It obtains the grace of prayer for us.* In order to pray we need God's help to know our needs and to desire his assistance. Our Lord has given us the example and merited for us the grace of prayer.

2. *It makes our prayer efficacious.* But we have, of ourselves, no right to be heard by God. By union with Christ, our prayer acquires a new and powerful efficacy.

3. *It supplements our insufficiency.* We know our needs but imperfectly and our time of prayer is limited. But our Lord's prayer is universal, being free from both these imperfections.

III. We will recall that in the priesthood we will be often asked to pray for others. We will ask our Lord to make us participate in the prayerful dispositions of his soul.

We will resolve to unite ourselves to Christ whenever we start to pray.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Adoration

Let us contemplate our Lord praying in the Garden of Olives. The time to consummate his sacrifice has come. He is about to be seized, given up to his enemies, insulted, scourged, crowned with thorns, condemned to death, and finally crucified. Before that ordeal, he spends some time in prayer, seeking in God the strength to undergo his passion. *Being in an agony, he prayed the longer.*[1]

Accompanied by only a few disciples, he prostrates himself on the ground. In the agonizing perspective of Calvary, he pours forth his soul to God, asking for himself and for all mankind a perfect acquiescence to the divine will. *Not my will, but thine be done.*[2]

Let us adore the eternal Father receiving this prayer of his Son prostrate before him as the universal suppliant of the Church. Let us try to unite our thoughts and dispositions with those of Christ praying in the Garden.

Considerations

Let us consider three precious blessings that come to us from the prayer of Christ.

[1] Luke **22**[43] [2] Luke **22**[42]

1. *It obtains the grace of prayer for us.* In order to pray we have need of God's help, for it is a supernatural work. Without this grace we could not even think of praying; we would neither be conscious of our needs nor have that spiritual instinct which leads Christian souls to address God in prayer; we would not ask what we ought nor ask it as we should. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought,*[1] says St. Paul. This grace is the first fruit of Christ's prayer.

In the life of Christ we have both an example and the grace to imitate it. That is why *it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren.*[2] This is distinctly true of his prayer.

By his practice of obedience, he taught us how to obey and merited the grace of obedience for us. So, too, in his sufferings. He has also taught us how to pray and has merited for us the grace of praying as we should.

The prayer of Christ obtains for us the consciousness of our own wretchedness and helplessness in doing good, our need of divine help to overcome temptation and practice

[1] Rom. 8[26] [2] Heb. 2[17]

virtue. It is also this grace which gives us the desire to pray. In fine, it brings us the coöperation of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to pray as we should.

2. *The prayer of Christ makes our prayer efficacious.* Our prayer, to be efficacious, must rise to heaven and move the heart of God to grant what we ask. We know that prayer has this power. The pages of Holy Writ and the voice of tradition bear testimony to that truth. But whence does Christian prayer derive this marvelous prerogative? How can a simple desire formulated in the human heart produce such effects? We must attribute them to the prayer of Christ, the foundation of our confidence.

Sinners as we are, we have no right to be heard by God. But it is not so with Christ. The dignity of his adorable person, the eminence of his priesthood, his character of Mediator and Redeemer, and his perfect holiness of life give him a privileged access to God. Whatever he asks, he is certain to obtain.

But we can pray in Christ and with him. His spirit in our souls is the inspiration and principle of our prayer; it is Christ praying in us.

Moved by grace, we ask God's help. It is not our voice that he hears, but that of his Son, to whom he can refuse nothing. By this union with the prayer of Christ, ours acquires an efficacy to which, of itself, it could never pretend. *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you.*[1]

3. *The prayer of Christ supplements our insufficiency.* However perfect, however fervent may be our prayer, it will always fall short of our needs. The general needs of the Church escape our thoughts; even our own personal necessities we know but imperfectly. We devote a certain amount of time every day to prayer; but even in the most contemplative life, this time is more or less limited. In spite of us, our other duties and our limited capacity for continuous prayer, oblige us to interrupt this holy exercise.

But our Lord's prayer is free from both these imperfections. It is universal. His soul knows perfectly the needs of his Church and of each member; he omits none in his prayer. Since he is the universal Mediator, he intercedes for all, just and sinners, living and dead. And his

[1] JOHN 16[23]

prayer embraces all time. From the blessed moment of the incarnation his soul rises to God and will continue to do so during all eternity. His prayer is without interruption.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, thou callest me to be one day the echo of thy prayer in the Church. By virtue of the priesthood, I will be obliged, after thy example, to pray not only for myself but for all the souls entrusted to me. Persuaded of the efficacy of my prayers and of my power with God, pious souls will come to me full of confidence to ask my intercession for them. I must, like thee, be a man of prayer.

For this purpose, I need abundantly to share in thy spirit of prayer; I must be animated by religious devotion, love, humility, and confidence like unto thee interceding for us.

Grant me these dispositions my Savior. I repeat the request made by thy disciples, witnesses of the fervency of thy prayer: *Lord, teach us to pray.*[1]

Are not my prayers so defective that I can apply to myself the words of St. James?

[1] Luke 11[1]

You ask, and you receive not; because you ask amiss.[1] I wish to yield myself entirely to the inspirations of thy spirit in my soul.

I resolve to unite myself to Christ whenever I start to pray.

Lord, teach us to pray.[2]

[1] JAS. 4[3]

[2] LUKE 11[1]

XXIV

THE ASCENSION

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the circumstances of our Lord's ascension. We will join with the apostles in their joy and sadness on that occasion. In thought, we will follow, and adore our Lord as he ascends to heaven.

II. We will consider the three chief circumstances of this mystery.

1. *He was carried up.* He leaves the earth. So we should be detached from the life of the senses. He ascends gradually; so we should progress in perfection. He enters heaven; so we should try to attain the practice of perfect charity.

2. *He sitteth at the right hand of God.* In heaven he sees our trials, coöperates with us, and rewards our fidelity.

3. *He shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.* We must ascend to heaven with him. The day will come when he will say to us: *Come, ye blessed of my Father.* Then we will understand the plans of divine Providence.

III. We will recall St. Paul's words urging the faithful to sustain their courage by the thought of Christ reigning in heaven.

We will resolve to animate our courage by considering the eternal reward which Christ has promised to his faithful followers.

To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne.

Adoration

The ascension is the last mystery in the life of the incarnate Word on earth for our salvation. The mission entrusted to him was accomplished. When dying on the cross, after fulfilling all the prophecies concerning, him, he could say: *It is consummated.*[1]

Forty days have passed since his resurrection. He employed that time to strengthen the faith of his disciples and to inculcate anew the teaching that he had given them for three years. After a final repast with them, he leads them to the Mountain of Olives, bids them farewell, and extends his hands to bless them. *And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up into heaven.*[2] *And a cloud received him out of their sight.*[3]

Let us join in the mingled spirit of sadness and joy which penetrated the hearts of these

[1] John 19[30] [2] Luke 24[51] [3] Acts 1[9]

disciples: sadness, because their Master had left them; joy, because he had entered upon the possession of his eternal glory.

Let us in thought follow our Lord as he ascends to heaven, escorted by angels and the souls that he has freed. Let us raise our minds and hearts to him enthroned in the glory of his divine majesty. *Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power.*[1]

Considerations

The gospel, supplemented by the Acts of the Apostles, tells us that Christ *was carried up,* that *he sitteth at the right hand of God,* and that *he shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.*

1. *He was carried up.* He leaves the earth in order to ascend into heaven, thereby teaching us the way we must follow him. Let us consider the different degrees through which we must pass in following our Lord to heaven.

In the first place his feet no longer touch the earth. This is an image of the soul detached from the life of the senses for the more perfect life of the spirit. Formerly

[1] Apoc. 4[11]

it was attached to earth. Numerous ties held it captive; love of earthly things exercised sway over it and was an obstacle to the complete reign of charity. But enlightened and moved by grace, it has broken these bonds and freed itself.

In the second place, Christ ascended gradually until a cloud hid him from sight. Thus the soul converted to God rises by degrees to the loftier regions of Christian perfection. It ascends from virtue to virtue, from sacrifice to sacrifice, ever further removed from this world which it has renounced.

Lastly, he entered heaven. His risen life received its full development. He reigns eternally in heaven. This is an image of the Christian soul that has attained the practice of perfect charity, removed from the griefs and joys of this life, undisturbed by temptations and trials.

2. *He sitteth on the right hand of God.* In this mystery not only is Christ a model of perfection, but he also offers us the help we need to practice perfection. *I will not leave you orphans.*[1] And again *I am with you all*

[1] JOHN 14[18]

days.[1] In heaven he sees our trials, coöperates with us, and rewards our fidelity.

He is a *witness* of our struggles, which are hidden from the sight of men because they are placed in the secret retreat of our conscience. But they are not hidden from him. He sees the heroism of the martyrs, the rigorous penances of the anchorites, the zeal of apostolic bishops and priests, and our faithfulness here in the seminary to all our duties. He understands the stress of our temptations and the generosity of our sacrifices.

He is our *coöperator*. Without him how could we resist so powerful enemies of our salvation? Says the prophet: *The Lord is with me as a strong warrior: therefore they that persecute me shall fall, and shall be weak.*[2] The grace of Christ never fails us. If we are faithful to that grace, no enemy can overcome us; and we will be able to practice even great heroism.

He is our *rewarder*. Whatever we accomplish in God's grace, no matter how insignificant it may seem, is written in the book of life. Thus shall we heap up great treasures

[1] MATTH. **28**[20] [2] JER. **20**[11]

of merit against the day when we enter into the heavenly kingdom. Has he not himself told us that a glass of cold water given in his name will not lack a reward?

3. *He shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.* To make our Lord's ascension complete, we must ascend to heaven with him. We are the members, he is the head. We should therefore be with him.

When the number of the elect will be completed and the moment of the final consummation has come, *he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead.*[1] Then the good will hear from his sacred lips: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*[2] Then Jesus, ascending again, will lead with him the blessed company of the saints who are to share his eternal bliss after having shared his sufferings and trials.

This will be the consummation of all mysteries as well as the justification of God's providence in governing the world. At present we cannot fully comprehend his wisdom. But on the last day it will be revealed to us

[1] *Nicene Creed* [2] MATTH. 25[34]

in all its perfection. We will repeat in accents of boundless gratitude the words of the psalmist: *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.*[1]

Acts and Resolutions

In the mystery of the ascension I find instruction, encouragement, and consolation, the model of Christian perfection, the promise of supernatural help in imitating that model, and a pledge of eternal reward.

This is why St. Paul urged the faithful to sustain their courage by the thought of Christ reigning in heaven. *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.*[2] And again: *Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.*[3]

Why, then, should I be absorbed in the desires and preoccupations of earth? Grant, my Savior, that the salutary thought of thy ascension and eternal kingdom may remain in my soul; that like the apostles I may love

[1] Ps. 88[2] [2] Coloss. 3[1] [3] Phillip. 3[20]

only thee, seek only thee, and live only for thee.

I resolve to animate my courage by considering the eternal reward which Christ has promised to his faithful followers.

To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne.[1]

[1] Apoc. 3[21]

XXV

THE APOSTLES' RETREAT

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord in his conduct towards the apostles. He lives with them for three years. When about to leave them, he directs them to wait in retirement. In a similar manner the Church prepares those who aspire to the priesthood.

II. We will consider three lessons contained in our Lord's words: *Stay you in the city.*

1. They must not attempt to hasten the time appointed by God. We must likewise submit to his guidance. It is the duty of the Church to regulate the time of our formation.

2. Our Lord teaches the apostles to banish all anxiety from their hearts. Like them we must enter upon a laborious ministry and a life of self-denial. We too need the same confidence.

3. These words of our Lord tell us the need of solitude and recollection. Otherwise we will not hear the word of God. It was needful for the apostles. No less so is it for us.

III. We will recall that the apostles' retreat was crowned with the graces of Pentecost. The same favors await us.

We will resolve to enter with all sincerity into the spirit of retirement which characterizes the seminary life.

Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord in his conduct towards the apostles. He could have made them instantly capable of fulfilling the ministry for which he destined them. But such is not the ordinary manner of his providence. The work of grace like that of nature is accomplished gradually.

After calling his apostles and obscurely revealing his purpose in their regard, he keeps them about him for three years. They accompany him, witness his miracles, hear his words, and are admitted to the most intimate details of his life. Thus does he prepare them for the ministry. He remains with them forty days after his resurrection, *speaking of the kingdom of God*.[1]

When about to ascend into heaven, instead of directing them to go forth at once and preach the gospel, he orders them to wait in peace and retirement at Jerusalem. *Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high*.[2] Ten days were passed in this retreat, at the end of which, enlightened and strengthened by the divine Paraclete, they begin their laborious ministry.

[1] Acts **1**[3] [2] Luke **24**[49]

Thus does our Savior show the Church how she must form and prepare those who aspire to the priesthood. They have to separate from the world, train their mind and heart in retirement, imbibe the maxims of sacerdotal perfection, and gradually strengthen the foundation of their virtue.

Considerations

Stay you in the city. These words, by which our Lord told the apostles how they were to prepare for the coming of the Holy Ghost, contain a three-fold lesson for us.

1. *Stay*, that is, quietly wait until the coming of the Holy Spirit and do not attempt to hasten, by imprudent eagerness, the time appointed by God's eternal wisdom.

Having only an imperfect idea of their vocation and mingling their love for Christ with worldly ambition, they had asked him if he would not soon establish the kingdom of Israel. But the Savior replied: *It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power.*[1]

The first duty of a soul called by God to be an instrument of his glory, is to abandon

[1] Acts 1[7]

itself to his guidance, to follow his orders, to advance according to his holy will.

But there are some seminarians who, under a pretext of zeal, wish to abridge the time of their preparation, who find their years in the seminary too long. It is not for us but for the Church to regulate the time of our formation. *It is not for you to know the times or moments.*

When their call to Orders is deferred, others complain and are discouraged. They forget that these delays are providential. Let them patiently wait until the Savior calls them.

2. When directing his apostles to wait in Jerusalem, our Lord gave them a lesson of confidence in God, teaching them to banish every anxiety from their heart and place unhesitating trust in his promises and in the efficacy of his help.

Was it not natural that, seeing themselves so weak and possessing resources so disproportionate to the great task which they had to accomplish, they should be seized with fear? What was that task? The conversion of the world to the doctrine of Christ. Yet our Lord warned them not to be disturbed. God will come to their aid. At the appointed time

he will clothe them with his strength and power.

The priesthood with its great duties is before us: the renunciation of natural desires, a life of angelic purity, a laborious ministry. But God has called us. We will trust in the help of his grace. Let us be faithful to God and his call; the help from on high will come in due time. *Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom.*[1]

3. We know that to receive the supernatural communications of the Holy Spirit, we must maintain a certain solitude and recollection. It is not in the midst of tumult that God performs his divine work in men's souls. Strong and generous resolve is not founded in noise and agitation but in calm and quiet, where God's voice can be heard.

This is why God, who wished to make the apostles his instruments in the conversion of the world, required them to prepare in quiet retreat for the coming of the Holy Ghost. *They were persevering with one mind in prayer with . . . Mary the mother of Jesus.*[2]

[1] LUKE 6[38] [2] ACTS 1[14]

The same reason prompts the Church to gather us here in the solitude, calm, and silence of the seminary. And when the hour approaches for the Spirit of God to descend upon us and communicate the divine powers of ordination, our retirement becomes more complete, our silence more profound, and our peace more undisturbed. *Stay . . . till you be endued with power from on high.*

Acts and Resolutions

The Acts of the Apostles, after describing their retirement in Jerusalem, sets forth in magnificent terms, the crowning event of that retreat. Such will also be the fruit of my years of retreat here in the seminary. By enlightening my mind as to the duties which the priesthood will impose on me, by freeing my heart from the vanities that have captivated it, by implanting firm habits of virtue in my will, the seminary life of solitude will prepare me for the unspeakable communications of God's Spirit. It will not be a sudden and complete transformation, miraculously accomplished, as in the case of the apostles. But as I advance in Orders, the power from on high will descend upon me by degrees,

making my soul little by little the soul of a priest. And when I go forth, I will be able to undertake confidently the great work of the priesthood to which thou, my God, hast called me.

I resolve to enter with all sincerity into the spirit of retirement which characterizes the seminary life.

Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high.[1]

[1] LUKE 24[49]

XXVI

THE FINDING OF THE CROSS

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the memorable finding of the cross. After three centuries of persecution came the triumph of the cross. We will thank our Lord for having left us this memorial of his death.

II. We will regard the trials of life as a cross that we all have to bear. Our duties towards it are summed up in three words uttered by a holy priest on his death-bed.

1. *Adorare.* We will adore the cross, especially in the sufferings that God sends us. Accepted in a Christian manner, they become a sacrifice of great merit.

2. *Tacere.* Our Lord suffered his passion in silence. We should imitate him. There are two degrees of this silence: the first, though resigned, seeks human comfort in time of trial; the other, more perfect, denies itself this consolation.

3. *Gaudere.* For those who understand the doctrine of salvation, the cross is devoutly to be desired. It is Christ's most precious bequest to us. By it we become like unto him.

III. We will confess that we have not always had these dispositions in time of trial.

We will resolve:

1. When we have to endure suffering, to recall that it is Christ presenting his cross to us;
2. Never to complain against our trials;
3. To strive to carry the cross of our sufferings with joy.

Adorare, tacere, gaudere.

Adoration

Let us recall the memorable fact in honor of which to-day's feast has been instituted. After three centuries of persecution came the triumph of the faith. Under the protection of the converted emperor, the Church spread and rose upon the ruins of idolatry.

It was the triumph of the cross of Christ. God inspired the mother of the first Christian emperor to go in search of that inestimable treasure. And St. Helena courageously entered upon the undertaking. Her efforts were crowned with success.

The pagan monument that marked the spot was destroyed and the cross unearthed. Striking miracles made it known as the true cross on which Christ died for our salvation.

Thenceforth devotion to the cross developed rapidly. No longer is the cross an instrument of punishment but a symbol of glory and triumph. Magnificent temples have been con-

structed in its honor. The smallest bit of that sacred wood is received with great veneration and enclosed in rich reliquaries.

Let us thank our Lord for having left us his cross. *O Crux ave, spes unica.*

Considerations

In a spiritual sense the cross of Christ means all the pains and sufferings of life. Thus understood, it is the portion of all. For those who carry it in a Christian manner it is a source of sanctification and merit. What must I do to have a share in this grace?

A certain holy priest was on his death-bed in the midst of great suffering. As he plainly discerned the grief of his friends gathered about him, the dying priest, with his little remaining strength, uttered these three words: *adorare, tacere, gaudere.* Let us consider them as three expressions of true Christian resignation.

1. *Adorare.* When St. Helena saw the true cross, her first act was one of adoration. Such is also our first duty when the cross is presented to us, not only its image or its material substance, but its living and spiritual reality. *Adorare.*

In the face of trial one who is not enlightened by grace, sees only the action of natural causes making him their victim. But faith gives us an entirely different view of it. Whether our suffering afflicts the body or is seated in the soul, it is something holy. It is Christ inviting us to carry his cross with him, to participate in his passion. We adore our Savior and the cross which he presents to us.

Suffering accepted in this Christian spirit has a great meritorious value. It is a sacrifice by which we honor and glorify God, acknowledging his supreme dominion, submitting to him, and offering ourselves to his divine majesty as victims of sacrifice.

2. *Tacere.* We should carry our cross in silent resignation. The gospel tells us when accused by false witnesses, *Jesus autem tacebat.* He was silent in the pretorium, on the road to Calvary, on the cross. Howsoever cruel his sufferings were, he utters no complaint or murmur. *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth,*[1] he says by the lips of the psalmist. And the prophet Isaias says: *He shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.*[2]

[1] Ps. **38**[10] [2] Is. **53**[7]

We should follow his example and imitate his silence. We may distinguish two degrees of this Christian silence.

The first is that of submissive resignation. We accept the cross which Christ presents to us. Although we feel its weight, we repress every word of complaint. But we weep and we seek human consolation. It is easier to bear suffering if we confide it to faithful friends.

This consolation is perfectly legitimate. Our cross does not cease to be meritorious. But more perfect and courageous souls wish only God to know their suffering. Their sacrifice is more complete.

3. *Gaudere.* More sublime than silent resignation is the joy of suffering. *If you partake of the suffering of Christ, rejoice.*[1]

For those who understand the doctrine of salvation the cross is devoutly to be desired, a treasure of infinite value. It is the great inheritance left us by Christ, embracing the most precious riches of heaven and earth.

The cross borne in this spirit makes us like unto our divine Master who willed to be

[1] PETER 4[13]

fastened upon it. It brings us abundance of grace and heavenly consolations. It is the certain way of salvation.

The senseless man shall not know: nor will the fool understand these things.[1] The cross frightens them. And they make every effort to avoid carrying it.

On the contrary, the followers of Christ love the cross. The Spirit of God reveals its charms to them. They receive it gladly and carry it with joy. *I rejoice in my sufferings,*[2] says St. Paul. And again: *I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations.*[3]

This does not mean that the cross will not be a heavy burden, but that it contains treasures of eternal happiness in the next life.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, often during my life thou hast repeated in a spiritual manner the favor accorded to St. Helena.

The saintly empress undertook a long voyage to find thy cross. She adored it and accorded it a magnificent triumph. Have I imitated her example? Have I rejoiced in

[1] Ps. 91[7] [2] Coloss. 1[24] [3] II Cor. 7[4]

carrying the cross, or have I at least accepted it with resignation? Have I not murmured and complained? Have I considered that it is Christ himself who presents it to me?

How far I have been from loving the cross! Grant, divine Master, that these words of thine may sink deep into my soul: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*[1]

I resolve:

1. When I have to endure suffering, to recall that it is Christ presenting his cross to me;

2. Never to complain against my trials;

3. To strive to carry the cross of my sufferings with joy.

Adorare, tacere, gaudere.

[1] LUKE 9[23]

III. WHITSUNTIDE

XXVII

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

SUMMARY

I. We will recall the scene of this mystery: the apostles gathered together, the Jews of different nations present in Jerusalem, the violent wind, and the action of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the apostles. We will adore and thank the Holy Spirit.

II. We will consider three effects which the coming of the Holy Ghost produced in the apostles.

1. *He revealed to them the nature of their vocation.* Christ had called them, instructed them, and consecrated them priests. However their vocation was still a mystery to them. But with the coming of the Holy Ghost they understood it all.

2. *The Holy Ghost gives them courage to follow their vocation.* They had been weak and timid. But now they have become heroes. They know the persecution that awaits them, but their courage is not shaken.

3. *He gives them perseverance in their vocation,* unfailing constancy. What suffering, danger, and persecution they had to undergo! But the Holy Ghost gave them supernatural courage.

III. We will recall that we have need of the same graces. We will pray for the grace to imitate the apostles.

We will resolve often during this octave to ask the Holy Ghost to descend upon us, upon the seminary, the clergy, the whole Church.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Adoration

Let us recall the marvelous scene described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Ten days have passed since they witnessed the Ascension of the divine Master. They had retired to Jerusalem to await the visit of the Holy Ghost who will complete the grace of the priesthood already bestowed upon them and will miraculously transform them; making them not only priests but also apostles.

The moment has come for the accomplishment of this prodigy, through which the words of Christ, still so mysterious will be fully understood by them.

It is the morning of the great feast of Pentecost. From all directions large throngs have entered the holy city. While the apostles, along with the Blessed Virgin, are in prayer, *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as*

of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.[1]

In the form of tongues of fire the Holy Ghost descends upon the disciples and communicates the fulness of his gifts. They go forth into the streets. St. Peter addresses the multitude with inspired eloquence. Three thousand persons, moved by grace, are converted, forming the nucleus of the Church which will soon fill the world.

Let us adore the divine Spirit. Let us thank him for the grace which he communicates to us and resolve to act with his strength and under the guidance of his inspiration. And let us pay homage to our apostolic models, placing ourselves under their protection and asking them to obtain for us their spirit of coöperation with the graces of the Holy Ghost.

Considerations

Let us consider three effects which the coming of the Holy Ghost produces in the apostles.

1. *He revealed to them the nature of their vocation.* Christ had called them to be his evangelists and witnesses. *You shall be wit-*

[1] Acts 2[2]

nesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.[1] He had instructed them. At the last moments of his life, he had imprinted in their souls the august character of the priesthood. However, strange as it may seem, their apostolic vocation was still a mystery to them. They know that an important mission has been entrusted to them. But what obscurity still hides the nature of that mission! What was this kingdom of God of which Christ had so often spoken to them and which he had come on earth to establish? What was to be their part in founding this kingdom? Imbued with the earthly ideas of their nation as to the reign of the Messias, they had not risen above the thought of a worldly empire in which Christ would be the king and they the chief officers.

But with the coming of the Holy Ghost they at once understood it all. The word, which they have heard from the lips of the Master without understanding them, are now clear. No longer is there any mystery, obscurity, or doubt for them.

[1] Acts 1[8]

They know that Christ's kingdom which they have to preach is a spiritual kingdom, altogether different from those of earth: it is the kingdom of souls in which they will be princes. But this rank, which is destined to be a source of eternal glory for them, will bring them trial and tribulation on earth. They will be despised, calumniated, persecuted. After a life of labor and suffering, they will undergo a painful martyrdom.

They see what Christ asks of them, the price for being associated with him in his eternal kingdom.

2. *The Holy Ghost gives them courage to follow their vocation.* They had been so weak and timid that, after abandoning their Master into the hands of his enemies, for fear of the Jews they hid themselves in Jerusalem. But under the action of the Holy Spirit they became heroes.

When they first followed Jesus and attached themselves to him, they were doubtless attracted, as St. Jerome says, by the prestige of our Lord's personality. Perhaps if at that time they knew what the Master would require of them, they would have been incapable of so great a sacrifice.

But on Pentecost, strengthened by the Spirit of God, they joyfully enter upon the life of sacrifice that opens before them, accepting all its rigorous hardships. Already they repeat in their hearts what St. Paul said later on: *Bands and afflictions wait for me at Jerusalem. But I fear none of these things, neither do I count my life more precious than myself, so that I may consummate my course and the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus.*[1]

Without fear, they are ready to suffer everything for the name and glory of their divine Master. They have only one ambition: to make him known and to spread the word of life throughout the world. Promptly they go forth and preach the resurrection of Christ to those very Jews who had crucified him a few days before.

3. *The Holy Ghost gives them perseverance in their vocation.* Their unfailing constancy was the most wonderful effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

A man of generous nature, especially when exalted by enthusiasm, readily conceives great undertakings. But often it is like a brilliant flame that will soon die out. Thus St. Peter had protested that he would die with our Lord

[1] Acts **20**[23]

rather than abandon him. However, a few hours later he shamefully denied him, even three times.

But on Pentecost the Holy Ghost gave the apostles supernatural courage. What sufferings, dangers, and persecutions they had to undergo! When we read the account of the labors of our missionaries in heathen lands, we are filled with admiration for their courage. But the mission of the apostles was still harder and more painful.

From one of St. Paul's epistles we can form an idea of his laborious ministry. What he suffered surpasses our imagination. To win souls to Christ he encountered numberless perils: he was imprisoned, scourged, exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre. And his ministry was crowned by a martyr's death.

Although we are not so well acquainted with the work of the other apostles, we know that they consecrated their lives to preaching the gospel, that they underwent persecution with constant firmness, and that they sealed their preaching with their blood.

Acts and Resolutions

The threefold grace which the apostles received on Pentecost is also necessary for us.

Do we understand our vocation? Do we consider the duties that it imposes on us? Is our idea of the priesthood that which the apostles had after Pentecost? Or is it more like that which they had before they were enlightened by the Holy Ghost?

We should ask of the Holy Ghost not only the grace to understand our vocation, but a spirit of generous courage. Are we ready to accept all the hardships and sacrifices implied in our vocation? Only the Spirit of God can make us faithful unto the end.

My Savior, this seminary where we are gathered together at thy call, is a new dwelling place of thy apostles. Thy Holy Spirit bestows the grace of the apostolate on our souls. Do not permit this grace to become unfruitful. Grant that we may receive it with a docile heart and that we may become worthy successors of the apostles, imitating their virtues and inheriting their zeal.

I resolve often during this octave to ask the Holy Ghost to descend upon us, upon the seminary, the clergy, the whole Church.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.[1]

[1] Acts 2[4]

XXVIII

THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Ghost given to the early Christians through the apostles. Until the end of time he will continue to abide in the Church. We will thank our Lord for this wonderful gift.

II. We will consider three principal traits of the primitive Church as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles.

1. *Unity of doctrine.* The apostles speak in the name of Christ. And the faithful accept their teaching as the word of God. The same authoritative word will continue to be heard in the Church until the last day. It is the foundation of the Church's unity.

2. *Charity.* Our Lord had recommended this virtue to his apostles. The establishment of the Church was the inauguration of the reign of charity. The faithful had their earthly possessions in common. They were of one heart and soul.

3. *Holiness.* In the midst of a corrupt world they practiced eminent sanctity, spending much of their time in prayer and frequently receiving the holy Eucharist. Their holiness aroused the admiration of all the people.

III. We will remind ourselves that the seminary ought to reflect the spirit of the early Church.

We will ask the Holy Ghost to inspire and aid our efforts.

We will resolve

1. To obey the rule more faithfully than in the past;

2. To practice a brotherly charity toward our fellow-seminarians;

3. To give our spiritual exercises a more predominant place in our life.

The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.

Adoration

On Pentecost morning, when the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, the different peoples then in Jerusalem heard them, each in its own tongue. St. Peter explains this new miracle to them and takes the occasion to announce the resurrection of Christ. Three thousand were converted. Presently five thousand were added to these first Christians. Thus was born the Catholic Church, at first concentrated in Jerusalem, then spread through Judea, and soon after extending over the whole civilized world.

Let us adore the Holy Ghost, the author of this prodigy. He it is who descended upon the apostles and through them was imparted to the faithful, thus giving birth to the Church.

This was the first application of that mysterious law by which the priests of the Church are the intermediaries between God and human souls, the channels of his grace, the chosen instruments destined to carry his adorable name to the extremities of the earth. Thus is the Church established.

The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. He took possession of it on Pentecost; and until the end of time he will continue to abide in it, producing works of holiness. From the first days of the Church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Christian faith and virtues began to spread their fragrance in the world.

Let us thank our Lord who, from his throne of heavenly glory, thinks of us and watches over us. *I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever.*[1]

Considerations

The Acts of the Apostles set forth the life of the primitive Church in three principal traits.

1. *Unity of belief. They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles.*[2] The members

[1] John 14[16] [2] Acts 2[42]

of the new society showed perfect docility in following the teaching of the apostles whose authority, solemnly established by the miracle of Pentecost, was acknowledged by all. The apostles presented themselves to the people as the envoys of Christ who had chosen them, made them witnesses of his miracles, entrusted the treasures of his revelation to them, and ordered them to preach his gospel.

They speak, not in their own name, but in that of Jesus. They teach, not their own doctrine, but that of Jesus.

And so their word is received as the word of God. The doctrine which they proclaim and the laws which they promulgate are accepted with equal submission. The Church was one in its belief, one in its sacraments, one in its rules of discipline; and the apostolic authority was the center and bond of this unity.

This same authoritative word will continue to be heard in the decrees of Councils, in the decisions emanating from the chair of Peter, and in the monuments of Christian tradition. Thus will the doctrine of the apostles be maintained. This unity will always be a distinctive mark of the true Church.

While the little company of Christians rec-

ognized the apostles as their divinely appointed teachers and professed obedience to them, these latter acknowledge St. Peter as their chief. Upon him, according to the word of the Master, the Church is built.

2. *Charity. All they that believed were together, and had all things common. And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.*[1]

After the last supper, in his parting words to his apostles, Christ had said: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*[2] Inspired by this divine teaching, the first Christians gave the world a remarkable example of the union that should reign between brethren. It was the inauguration of the reign of charity.

Before the coming of the Holy Ghost, this virtue was almost unknown. Outside of the family circle, men did not love one another. The pagans scarcely knew any other rule of life than self-love. Although the love of one's neighbor was inscribed in the law of the Jews, it was little understood or practiced. It is the Christian Church that has taught the

[1] ACTS 2^{44}, 4^{32} [2] JOHN 13^{35}

world that men should love one another as brethren.

They used to meet together to be instructed in the faith by the apostles and to encourage one another.

As nothing contributes so much to destroy fraternal charity as opposition of interests, *as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles. And distribution was made to every one according as he had need. Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them.*[1]

This was a striking manifestation of charity that animated the first Christians. And the same spirit is perpetuated in the Church in the religious orders.

The sacred writer briefly sums up the charity that united the first followers of Christ, by saying: *the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.*[2] This was possible because charity had established a perfect accord of thoughts and feelings among them; because

[1] Acts $4^{34, 32}$ [2] Acts 4^{32}

the Holy Spirit lived in them; because their minds and hearts were devoted to the love and service of Christ.

3. *Holiness. Continuing daily with one accord in the temple,* says St. Luke, . . . *they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*[1] With the edifying piety of these first Christians, this community of heaven transported to earth, contrast the pride, impiety, and voluptuousness of the outside world. Even the Pharisees, despite their pretensions to austerity, were, according to our Lord's testimony, only whitened sepulchres.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there appears a new society whose members practiced eminent holiness. They devoted much of their time to prayer, in praising and blessing God. *Continuing daily with one accord in the temple.* With simplicity and purity of heart they frequently receive the Eucharist. *Breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart.*

Their holiness aroused the admiration of all

[1] ACTS **2**[46]

the people. *Having favor with all the people.* And their manner of life provoked universal praise. *The people magnified them.*[1] Others judged themselves unworthy of association in this company of saints. *Of the rest no man darest join himself unto them.*[2] Even the violence of the chief men of the Jews was restrained. *For they feared the people; lest they should be stoned.*[3]

Acts and Resolutions

Should not the seminary reflect the spirit of the early Church? In our rule is represented that apostolic authority which the first Christians obeyed so readily. We are a family of brothers, sharing the same life, seated at the same table, taking part in the same exercises, directing our efforts toward the same end, animated by the same spirit. Have we not a special duty to love one another, to have one heart and one soul?

But in all truth, are obedience, charity, and edification dominant characteristics of my life in the seminary as they were among the Christians of apostolic times?

[1] Acts 5[13] [2] Acts 5[13] [3] Acts 5[26]

Holy Spirit, whose active presence in the souls of the first Christians produced such wonders, grant that the seminary, inspired, directed, and animated by thee, may be a reproduction of the life of these early Christians. May we be a family of brothers united in obedience, charity, and piety.

I resolve:

1. To obey the rule more faithfully than in the past;

2. To practice a brotherly charity toward my fellow seminarians;

3. To give my spiritual exercises a more predominant place in my life.

The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.[1]

[1] Acts 4[32]

XXIX

STRUGGLES OF THE INFANT CHURCH

SUMMARY

I. We will recall that from the beginning the Church had enemies to combat. We will adore the Holy Ghost and thank him for all the triumphs of the Church.

II. We will consider that the Church has had three principal enemies.

1. *False science.* There was a superficial sneering kind of science and science that pretended to be serious. We will see how St. Peter met the attacks of the former and St. Stephen those of the latter.

2. *Brute force.* The chief priests forbade the apostles to preach in the name of Christ. They went so far as to stone St. Stephen. A general persecution was organized. But this providentially served to spread the faith.

3. *Corruption.* Ananias and Saphira, then Simon the magician appear to us as the ancestors of those unworthy sons of the Church who try to transform her into an institution for worldly gain.

III. We will recall that in the defense of the Church the Spirit of God employs human instruments. Our vocation destines us for this noble mission. We will ask ourselves whether we are earnestly preparing to combat these three enemies.

We will resolve to profit by all the means at our disposal in preparing for the great mission of the priesthood.

Be you brave in warfare, and battle with the ancient serpent, and you will receive an eternal kingdom.

Adoration

God, who wished the Church on earth to be a militant society, has permitted it to encounter powerful enemies from its very beginning. But the Holy Ghost never abandons her in these trials. He has been her defender and support, enabling her to overcome all obstacles.

To the martyrs he gives courage to shed their blood for the faith; to apologists, the light to combat and expose error; to pastors, the spirit of vigilance. To that rock on which the Church of Christ is built, he gives a firmness that will make it eternally victorious over the attacks of hell.

Let us adore the Holy Spirit and thank him for all the triumphs of the Church and for those which by his grace we have won against ourselves and against the tempter. At our ordination the Holy Ghost will be given to us especially as a principle of strength so

that the Church may find us loyal defenders, true successors of the apostles and their first disciples.

Considerations

We know that the Church has encountered three powerful enemies in the past and that she will have to struggle against these same enemies until the end of time. They are false science which denies her divine origin and her supernatural prerogatives; brute force which tries to repress her expansion; corruption which, like a subtle poison, would destroy the very root of her life. Let us consider these three struggles which the Church has to sustain.

1. *False science.* This enemy is constantly changing its form and, although repulsed again and again, continues to renew its attacks.

At first it was superficial science that does not enter into serious discussion but sneeringly despises the claims of the Church. To support its most astounding denials, it alleges no argument but sarcasm. To destroy our mysteries and dogmas, it changes them, minimizes them, reduces them to insignificant proportions, or gives to the miracles on which

religion is founded, an explanation that makes them purely natural events or renders them ridiculous. In the eighteenth century this school was represented by Voltaire. It still has some followers.

At sight of the divine enthusiasm produced in the apostles by the presence of the Holy Ghost, there were some men, who unable to explain the prodigy, in place of acknowledging the power of God, did not hesitate to attribute it to drunkenness. *Others mocking said: These men are full of new wine.*[1]

In the second place is so-called science employing more serious methods. There were at Jerusalem synagogues where the law was taught, where the most able scholars defied St. Stephen to a formal discussion in which they would vanquish the holy deacon by the resources of their learning. *Now there arose some of that which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them that were of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.*[2]

Thus began the era of controversy.

The sacred writer tells us how both these methods of attack were repulsed.

[1] ACTS **2**[13] [2] ACTS **6**[9]

St. Peter refutes the first by explaining what took place as the fulfillment of ancient prophecies.

St. Stephen had studied the Scriptures in the most celebrated schools. To this knowledge was added the divine science inspired by the Holy Spirit, teaching him the true sense of sacred books better than all the doctors could do. *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke.*[1]

2. *Brute force. The Lord increased daily together such as should be saved.*[2] *And the multitude of men and women who believed in the Lord was more increased.*[3] The seed of the gospel was soon to become a great tree spreading its branches over the whole earth.

The powers of earth were alarmed. The chief priests of the Jews see that the synagogue is being supplanted by the Church. While waiting for Rome to employ its mighty power against the Church, the sanhedrin uses all its resources to arrest her progress.

We see the apostles brought before this tribunal, cast into prison, beat with rods, and threatened with still more severe punishment if they continue preaching the gospel. But the

[1] Acts 6^{10} [2] Acts 2^{47} [3] Acts 5^{14}

apostles reply in the words so often repeated by later martyrs: *Non possumus.*[1]

St. Stephen, having proved the divine mission of Christ and the obligation of submitting to his law, courageously sealed his testimony with his blood. This first Christian martyr proclaims his divine Master with his last breath. *They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*[2]

This was but the prelude of the bloody persecution that followed. The little band of Christians was forced to leave Jerusalem. *At that time there was raised a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all dispersed through the countries of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*[3]

Saul is at the head of the persecutors. He consented to the martyrdom of Stephen. *Saul made havoc of the Church.*[4]

It seemed that the Church would be unable to withstand that violent attack. But while the violence of earthly powers pursued the disciples of Christ, scattered them and poured forth their blood, *the word of the Lord increased and multiplied.*[5] This very dispersion of the

[1] Acts 4[20] [2] Acts 7[58] [3] Acts 8[1]
[4] Acts 8[3] [5] Acts 12[24]

faithful was the providential means of spreading the Church. *They therefore that were dispersed, went about preaching the word of God.*[1] Thus Philip the deacon carries the gospel to the inhabitants of Samaria, then baptizes the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia, and even preaches the kingdom of God in the Pentapolis.

3. *Corruption*, has always been the most dreaded enemy of the Church. It has threatened both priests and faithful. It is not the violence of persecution, but a subtle insinuating poison that more effectively accomplishes the same result.

From the beginning there were scandals altering the simplicity and customs of the primitive Church. St. Peter, by a terrible but necessary example, energetically strikes the root of the evil. The same seduction attacks the apostles themselves. Simon the magician, outwardly converted to the faith but continuing to serve the spirit of darkness, when he *saw that by the imposition of the hand of the apostles the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money; saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*[2]

[1] ACTS 8^4 [2] ACTS 8^{18}

This sacrilegious simony is a hideous leprosy against which the Church has had to contend age after age. It is, perhaps, the greatest danger she has had to encounter, for it tends to degrade the holy priesthood and transform the Church of God into an institution for worldly gain.

But the audacious attempt of Simon was frustrated by the fidelity of the apostles. *Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money,* St. Peter replied.[1] Thus he shows us with what independence and in what spirit of disinterestedness we should exercise our holy functions, giving freely what we have freely received.

Acts and Resolutions

The Spirit of God in the Church has made her victorious over her enemies. But in winning these victories he makes use of human instruments. At first it was the apostles and the deacons of the early Church. To-day it is the bishops and priests who form the defensive army of the Church.

[1] Acts 8^{20}

This is the mission to which I am called. Am I sufficiently prepared for this strife? To combat the false science of to-day, God's priests need to be the most learned of men. Am I profiting by the abundant means of study at my disposal?

Our holiness of life should be the confirmation of our teaching. Does my progress in piety and the practice of priestly virtues give me reason to hope that I will one day be a capable defender of holy Church?

Lastly, the soldiers of the Church need courage. Do I find in myself weaknesses of character that promise sad failure in the future?

Realizing in part my deficiency, I implore thee, my God, to help me by thy grace. Renew the miracle of Pentecost for me and for my brethren. So that we may go forth enlightened and intrepid preachers of thy word.

I resolve to profit by all the means at my disposal in preparing for the great mission of the priesthood.

Be you brave in warfare, and battle with the ancient serpent, and you will receive an eternal kingdom.[1]

[1] *Off. of Apos.*

XXX

VOCATION

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Ghost in the mystery of Pentecost. Through the priesthood he continues the marvels of those early days in the Church.

II. To perpetuate the priesthood.

1. The Holy Ghost plants the seeds of vocation in certain souls. He gives them the necessary inclination and courage for this life of sacrifice.

2. He places these souls in a suitable environment. Some vocations are lost. But there are always enough for the needs of the Church. The Holy Ghost gives the future priests a Christian family and the favorable protection of the seminary.

3. He enables the priests of the Church to be faithful to their duties in spite of dangers and seductions.

III. We will call to mind the succession of graces by which the Holy Ghost has developed our vocation. We will thank him for these great favors.

We will resolve:

1. To thank God for our vocation by life-long fidelity in his service;

2. Never to forget that our life in the seminary is a preparation for the priesthood.

You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me.

Adoration

Let us picture to ourselves the apostles on the first Pentecost possessed by the Spirit of God, enlightened by his light, fortified with his strength, transformed into new men, inaugurating their great ministry with magnanimous fortitude.

Let us recall the first fruits of the apostolic preaching, the interior life that animated the first disciples, their submission to the teaching of the apostles, their practice of charity and holiness.

Let us adore the Holy Ghost who has inspired and protected the Church from the time of her birth.

Since then she has grown. The Church is no longer the little band of apostolic times, but an immense society extending to every corner of the earth. The Spirit of God continues to abide in her; the mystery of Pentecost has not ceased.

All the wonders that the Holy Ghost has performed in and for the Church during the ages have been, for the most part, accomplished through the instrumentality of the priesthood. The Holy Spirit is the source of sacerdotal vocations. Let us thank him for having planted the seed of this vocation in our soul.

Considerations

To perpetuate the priesthood, on which the life of the Church depends, three things are necessary.

1. The first is that the germs of sacerdotal vocation be planted in certain souls predestined by God for the holy ministry. If their development should be interrupted, the very source of the priesthood would be destroyed.

Owing to the protection of the Holy Spirit, this has never happened. The Church, even in its most difficult times, has never lacked priests. During the ages of persecution when the priesthood was almost certain to be the road to martyrdom, the ranks of the clergy were maintained as in times of peace.

Nothing shows the protection of the Holy Ghost better than this. The Jewish priesthood was hereditary in the family of Aaron; hence its perpetuity was assured. But in the Church it is freely accepted by those who have the courage to fulfill its duties. With rare exceptions, the temporal advantages that it offers are not such as to make one prefer the sanctuary to the world. On the contrary, it imposes painful sacrifices, a life of renunciation. The Holy Ghost gives certain chosen

souls the necessary attraction for this life and the courage to assume this burden and responsibility.

This action of the Holy Spirit, though sometimes concealed under the influence of secondary agents, is often manifested by striking evidence.

Why does this child, whose reason is only beginning to develop, already feel an attraction for the priesthood? His desire is not the result of external circumstances but often in spite of them. It is the work of the Holy Ghost.

2. The souls in whom this sacerdotal germ has been planted, must be placed in an environment suitable for its development. For lack of such environment, how many vocations have been lost, stifled before they could reach maturity?

Yet the Holy Spirit sees to it, with jealous care, that enough are developed for the needs of the Church. These he surrounds with his protection. He removes the obstacles from their path and, with urgent gentleness, leads them to the goal of their desire. Each of us could verify this in his own life.

In how many ways he has aided us to follow

our vocation! Like the Israelites in the desert, we have been safeguarded and guided by his angels. He has led us through childhood and manhood, even to the portal of the holy priesthood to which he has called us.

Was it not a pious mother who first recognized our attraction for the altar and who cultivated it with love? A zealous pastor prudently encouraged us. Finally we were received in the seminary, this place destined by God to train the mind and heart of those who aspire to the altar.

Thus favored by God, our vocation has grown stronger. We have recognized his voice more distinctly, until a solemn and authentic call summons us to the ordination.

While the bishop performs the external ceremonies of the different orders, the Holy Ghost gives these symbols their efficacy. He enters our soul, blesses, sanctifies, and consecrates it. Having already given us the character of baptism and confirmation, the Holy Spirit imprints a new character, holier and more august, upon our soul; it becomes the soul of a priest.

3. The work of the Holy Ghost in relation to the priesthood does not cease at ordination.

The new priest has received divine powers and abundant grace. But will he always be a good priest? Instead of edifying the Church by the practice of priestly virtues, will he scandalize her by a life unworthy of his sacred character? Notwithstanding some exceptions, the Christian priesthood, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, has offered the world an example of piety, regularity, and zeal.

Our office inspires us with salutary fear. Its duties are numerous and particularly delicate. We are constantly in the presence of dangers even in the work of the sacred ministry. Although weak, fallible men, we are obliged to lead an angelic life amidst the corruption of the world.

Must we not recognize God's special providence over his priests, sustaining them in their lofty vocation, making them always the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

Even in the worst epochs of the world's history, they have furnished noble examples of virtue, self-denial, holiness, and zeal. The annals of the Church mention only the most illustrious. But how many countless others have been unnoticed by history?

Acts and Resolutions

Divine Spirit of God, I am among those whom thou hast set apart to be elevated to the rank of thy sacred ministry. Thou hast drawn me from the midst of my brethren far more worthy, perhaps, to give me the unction of the priesthood. Thou hast developed the seed of my vocation which thou didst plant in my soul.

Often, my God, I have reviewed the succession of graces with which thou hast favored me all during my life. I am determined to correspond with the grace more faithfully than in the past.

I resolve:

1. To thank God for my vocation by life long fidelity in his service;

2. Never to forget that my life in the seminary is a preparation for the priesthood.

You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me.[1]

[1] Acts 1[8]

XXXI

THE HOLY TRINITY

SUMMARY

I. We will make an act of faith in the mystery of the holy Trinity. We will adore the three divine persons. We will unite our praises to those of the Church.

II. We will consider that the Trinity is manifested to us in the world of nature, of grace, and of glory.

1. *The world of nature.* This world is the work of the Trinity. It is a manifestation of the Father's power, the image of the Son, and is animated by the Holy Ghost.

2. *The world of grace,* that is the supernatural order. The grace of the redemption comes to us through the sacraments in the name of the holy Trinity. We are united to the Trinity by habitual grace.

3. *The world of glory.* In heaven the adorable Trinity will be revealed to us and given to us. Then will our union with God be complete.

III. We will recall the adoration of the holy Trinity, which forms part of our morning prayer. We will ask ourselves whether we recite this act of adoration attentively and devoutly.

We will resolve each morning to consecrate the entire day to the holy Trinity.

Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu.

Adoration

Let us make an act of faith in the mystery which the Church proposes for our adoration to-day. I believe that there is only one God; infinitely perfect. But in this God I adore three distinct persons: the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son. In the divine life of the holy Trinity is God's eternal happiness.

Let us not try to understand this mystery which is beyond the comprehension of our finite intellect. But, relying on God's infallible revelation and the authority of the Church, let us adore this mystery with humble and submissive faith. *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. Deum verum, unum in Trinitate et Trinitatem in unitate, venite adoremus.*[1] *Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trinitas, nunc et semper, et per infinita sæcula sæculorum.*

Considerations

The holy Trinity is manifested to us in the world of nature, of grace, and of glory.

[1] Invit.

1. *The world of nature.* Theology teaches us that the works of God *ad extra* must be attributed to all three divine persons. Their perfect equality requires that they should have everything in common except what constitutes their personal distinction.

Especially in the creation of man, the masterpiece of God's handiwork, do we perceive the simultaneous action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

In Holy Writ, we have first the words of God the Father exhorting, so to speak, the two other divine persons to concur with him in the creation of man. *Let us make man to our image and likeness.*[1]

Then comes the action of the Son. The image of God, eternally contemplated in his Son, is impressed upon matter to give birth to man who will thus carry the likeness of the Creator on his brow. *And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him.*[2]

Lastly, the Holy Spirit enkindles intelligence and love in this privileged creature. *He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.*[3]

[1] GEN. 1[26] [2] GEN. 1[27] [3] GEN. 2[7]

Thus we see that the world of nature is the work of the holy Trinity.

2. *The world of grace.* We recognize the action of the Trinity in the mysteries which are the foundation of the supernatural life, in the application of the fruit of these mysteries, which is grace, and in the supernatural state to which that grace elevates us.

We see the action of the Father, promising man a Redeemer, preparing the world for his coming, and in the fulness of time sending his divine Son.

For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.[1]

The second person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word of God, sent by the Father, lived our life, suffered and died to expiate our sins and merit grace for us. *Who loved me and delivered himself for me.*[2]

After ascending into heaven, he sends us the Holy Spirit who founds the Church and completes the work of the Father and the Son.

Hence to the august Trinity we owe the gift of grace. Our regeneration by baptism is conferred upon us in the name of the Father

[1] JOHN 3[16] [2] GAL. 2[20]

and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The invocation of the Trinity accompanies all the blessings that the Church bestows on her children. And when we approach the dread passage from time to eternity, she bids us a last farewell in the name of the Trinity. *Depart, O Christian soul, out of this sinful world, in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered and died for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee.* And she implores divine mercy for us, saying: *For although he has sinned, yet he still retains a true faith in Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*[1]

Do not all the sacraments confer on us a sacred bond uniting us to the three persons of the Trinity, enabling us to participate in the divine nature, making us children of God? *He gave them power to be made the sons of God.*[2] *Your bodies are the members of Christ,* says St. Paul. *The Spirit of God dwelleth in you.*[3]

3. *The world of glory.* The holy Trinity is the source of our happiness. In the first place, in heaven we will perfectly understand

[1] *Recom. of a Departing Soul.* [2] JOHN 1[12]
[3] I COR. 6[15], 3[16]

the nature of God. The obscurity that veils this mystery from our view here below will there be removed. We can then contemplate, no longer by faith but by direct vision the glory of the adorable Trinity.

Our heart will be gratified to its full capacity by the possession of these three divine persons. All our happiness comes from the blessed Trinity. But in heaven the joy given to the elect is without measure.

Lastly, the union that associates us with the Trinity here on earth will be completed in the world of glory. *We are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is.*[1] United to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, participating in their life, their glory, and their beatitude, we will be in God, and God will be in us. As St. Paul says: *That God may be all in all.*[2]

Acts and Resolutions

According to the morning prayer composed by Father Olier, the founder of St. Sulpice, we say: *Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trini-*

[1] I John 3[2] [2] I Cor. 15[28]

tas, nunc et semper, et per infinita sæcula sæculorum. In union with the incarnate Word and in the grace of the Holy Spirit, we adore and thank the heavenly Father who created us, the divine Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who sanctified us. We implore forgiveness for the abuse we have made of these gifts and offer to the divine persons our works, thoughts, and desires. We ask the Father to perfect us, the Son to enlighten us, and the Holy Ghost to sanctify us.

Every morning I adore the holy Trinity. But do I make this act of adoration attentively and devoutly? Do I really consecrate each day to the adorable Trinity?

Most blessed Trinity, pardon my neglect. Grant me the grace to be more faithful in the future.

I resolve each morning to consecrate the entire day to the holy Trinity.

Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu; laudemus et superexaltemus eum in saecula.[1]

[1] *Off. SS. Trinit.*

XXXII

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord inspiring the Church to establish this feast. We will recall the circumstances of its establishment and the growth of devotions to the Blessed Sacrament. We will rejoice that our Lord has been so much honored.

II. We will consider three characteristics that distinguish this feast from others.

1. The others are commemorations of past events. But the object of this feast is a living reality, our Lord and Savior present in the host.

2. Other feasts honor particular mysteries in the life of our Lord. But this one honors his very person; it contains all the mysteries of his life.

3. The end of other feasts is to make us participate in the grace of the mystery which they celebrate. In this one our sole aim is to glorify Christ and make reparation for the injuries he receives.

III. We will recall that we have often taken part in the celebration of this feast. We will ask ourselves whether we have striven to increase our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

We will resolve:

1. To thank our Lord again and again for the great blessing of the holy Eucharist;

2. By increased devotion to make reparation for offenses that he receives in the Blessed Sacrament.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.

Adoration

Let us adore our Lord inspiring the Church to establish this feast in honor of his body and blood. Many centuries had already passed since the institution of the sacrament of the altar. It was an object of worship on the part of the Church. Every year, on holy Thursday, she celebrated the anniversary of the last supper at which Christ left us this pledge of his love. Still, no special feast had been established in honor of the Eucharist.

A heavenly inspiration was the means employed by Providence to place this feast in the cycle of Christian feasts. The Roman pontiffs, in their zeal for the glorification of the Eucharist, eagerly followed this indication of God's will. The feast of Corpus Christi was instituted by them and the liturgy was enriched by one of its most beautiful offices.

The establishment of this feast marks an important epoch in the cult of the Blessed

Sacrament. Thenceforth this devotion, so fundamental in the Church, began to develop marvelously in most varied forms until now it occupies an eminent place among our cherished devotions. Among other forms of that cult we may note the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, the most striking part of this day's ceremony, now so frequent and popular, Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament, the Forty Hours' devotion, perpetual adoration, the founding of societies and religious orders consecrated to the adoration of the Holy Eucharist and various congresses meeting in its honor.

Let us adore the Holy Spirit inspiring these holy practices. And let us rejoice that our Lord has been so much honored.

Considerations

Let us consider three characteristics that distinguish the feast of Corpus Christi from the other feasts established in honor of our Lord.

1. The others are anniversaries of past events, as Christmas, Easter, and the Ascension.

But the object of to-day's feast is Jesus Christ living in the Blessed Sacrament. We are called by the Church to adore, not a mys-

tery that took place centuries ago, but a living reality. It is the Savior continuing his presence in our midst, thus multiplying himself to receive our adoration and communicate his life to us.

With jealous care the Church guards this, her richest treasure, and surrounds it with her most profound homage. The more to encourage her children in their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, she has established this feast of Corpus Christi. Ordinarily he remains hidden in the tabernacle; but to-day he is exposed on the altar for our adoration.

2. The other feasts honor particular mysteries in the life of our Lord. To be sure, it is always Christ whom we honor in these mysteries, but in some special phase of his life.

The object of to-day's feast is the very person of Christ present in the host which contains not only his body, soul, and divinity, but also the mysteries of his life; for they are all included in the mystery of the altar. Thus we can venerate at once his incarnation, his birth, his life at Nazareth, his public ministry, his passion and death, his resurrection and ascension.

It comes after the succession of feasts that

commemorate different events in his life, from the Nativity to the Ascension. The Church has placed it in the last place to crown these other solemnities, to celebrate them, so to speak, all together in this feast of the Blessed Sacrament. *Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum, misericors, et miserator Dominus.*

3. In all the other feasts we honor Christ and thank him for his mercies. But their chief end is to make us participate in the grace of the mystery which they celebrate and to imitate his virtues.

In the feast of Corpus Christi the sole aim of the Church has been to glorify Jesus Christ present on our altars. It is a magnificent triumph in honor of the Eucharist, testifying our gratitude to Christ, our faith and our love, and offering some reparation for the outrages he receives from heretics and bad Christians.

The hymns and the whole celebration of this feast have a marked character of joy and triumph.

> Sacris solemniis juncta sint gaudia,
> Et ex praecordiis sonent praeconia.
> Pange, lingua, gloriosi
> Corporis mysterium.

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.
Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem,
Lauda ducem et pastorem,
In hymnis et canticis.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, I have often taken part in this feast which holy Church has established in honor of thy sacred body. It is a glorious manifestation of our belief in thy real presence. Blessed be thou for the joys and consolations that come to us during this feast!

The external ceremony of the liturgy attracts my attention and admiration. Have I made it an occasion to increase my love for the Blessed Sacrament, for this fundamental devotion of every Christian, especially of those who aspire to the holy priesthood?

I resolve:

1. To thank our Lord again and again for the great blessings of the Holy Eucharist;

2. By increased devotion to make reparation for the offenses that he receives in the Blessed Sacrament.

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.

XXXIII

THE SACRED HEART

SUMMARY

I. We will review the growth of devotion to our blessed Lord in the Church. We will recall in particular the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart. We will thank the Holy Ghost for these wonders of his inspiration.

II. We will consider the object, purpose and fruits of this devotion.

1. *The object* is our Lord's heart, considered as the noblest part of his adorable body and considered as the symbol of his love for us.

2. *Its purpose* is to thank our Lord for his love and to make atonement for the outrages he receives.

3. *Its fruits.* Our Savior himself promises both temporal and spiritual blessings to those who practice this devotion.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we have been faithfully devoted to the Sacred Heart. We will renew our consecration to this divine heart.

We will resolve to renew frequently our act of consecration to the Sacred Heart, especially on the first Friday of each month.

Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, inflame our heart with love for thee.

Adoration

Founded by Christ and fructified by his grace, fruit of his sacrifice, the Church has always been eager to express her gratefulness and love to the Savior. She has placed devotion to the incarnate Son of God in the rank of supreme importance among her religious duties. This devotion began with the birth of the Church and has constantly grown from century to century. First it regarded the person of Christ, then his different mysteries, later on the sacrament in which he gives himself to us, then his holy name and the noblest parts of his adorable body. The devotion to the sacred heart, like the feast of Corpus Christi, owes its origin to a supernatural revelation in which our Lord expressed his desire to see it established in the Church. At first it was received with prudent reserve. But it was not long in overcoming all opposition and receiving universal approval. The Church sanctions it with her authority, for she has established the feast of the Sacred Heart; the faithful practice it with great fervor; it has definitely won a place among our most universally cherished devotions.

Let us adore the Holy Ghost and thank him for these wonders of his inspiration. Let us ask our divine Master to form in our souls a tender devotion to his sacred heart.

Considerations

Let us consider the object of this devotion, its purpose, and the fruits that it procures for us.

1. *Its object* is our Savior's heart. Whether we consider this divine heart in itself as one of the organs of Christ's adorable body or as the symbol of his love for man, it deserves the homage of our adoration.

The heart, with the blood that it circulates, is the noblest part of our body. It is, we may say, the centre of life which becomes extinct when the heart ceases to beat. And there is a close relation between our soul and the movements of the heart. All the emotions that we feel: joy and sadness, calm and anxiety, peace and terror, love and hatred, are reflected there. In the heart of Christ, then, were echoed all the acts of his life, his prayers, the sufferings of his passion, the joy of his resurrection, his love for God and man. Has it not justly become a special object of worship?

In the language of all peoples the heart is the symbol of love. It is, then, especially Christ's love for us, symbolized by his heart, that the Church proposes for our veneration in this feast. In the words of Pope Pius VI: *Substantia devotionis Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu eo spectat ut, in symbolica cordis imagine, immensam caritatem effusumque amorem divini Redemptoris nostri meditemur atque veneremur.*[1]

Our Lord loved us even so as to die for us. The same love inspired all his mysteries and still keeps him in our midst in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. *The purpose* of this devotion. It is a return of love for love, a means of testifying our gratitude for the many blessings that come to us from Christ's sacred heart.

But it is especially to offer reparation for all the offenses that he receives from men who insult his love for them.

The saints tell us that the perspective of that ingratitude was one of the most painful sufferings of the Savior during his passion. His glorified heart can no longer suffer. That is why we feel the need of offering him some compensation for the outrages he receives.

[1] *Lit. ad Ep. Pistor,* June 30, 1781.

This is the chief end for which the feast of the Sacred Heart was established.

Let us consider the words of our Lord himself to Blessed Margaret Mary in the apparition which was the origin of this devotion.

"Behold this heart which has loved men so much that it spared nothing, even to pouring itself forth and being consumed, to testify its love for them. In return I receive from most of them only ingratitude, by the contempt, irreverence, sacrileges, and coldness which they have for this sacrament of love. But what I feel more keenly is that hearts consecrated to me treat me thus. That is why I ask you that the Friday after the octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament be dedicated to a particular feast in honor of my heart; that you offer your holy communion on that day as an act of reparation to my heart for the indignities it has suffered while exposed on the altar."

3. *The fruits* which this devotion procures for us. Our Lord himself has made them known to us. "I promise you," he said to Blessed Margaret Mary, "that my heart will expand to spread the influence of its divine love upon all those who will render this honor

to it. I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life. I will put peace in their families. I will console them in all their sufferings. I will be their sure refuge during life and especially at death. I will bless all their undertakings. Sinners will find in my heart an infinite ocean of mercy. Lukewarm souls will become fervent, and fervent souls will be elevated to great perfection. I will even bless the houses where the image of my sacred heart will be exposed and honored. I will give priests the power to touch the most obdurate hearts. Those who spread this devotion will have their names written in my heart where they will never be effaced."

Acts and Resolutions

My divine Master, I have been saddened at the thought of the ingratitude which thy adorable heart receives. I have promised not only that I would not add to these injuries, but that I would make atonement for them by greater fidelity and love, by my zeal in practicing and spreading this devotion. Thou hast the more right to expect this of me since I am among those consecrated to thee, the object of thy predilection.

Have I been faithful to this duty? Have I a deep sincere devotion to thy sacred heart? Do I feel the need of consoling that heart by increased fervor in thy service?

I consecrate myself to thy adorable heart. I offer thee all that I have, all that I am: my body, my soul, all its powers, my thoughts and affections, my trials and sufferings.

I resolve to renew frequently my act of consecration to the sacred heart, especially on the first Friday of each month.

Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, inflame our heart with love for thee.

XXXIV

THE INTERIOR LIFE OF OUR LORD

SUMMARY

I. In the light of faith we will consider the interior life of our Lord. A single act of worship on his part gives more glory to God than all the rest of the universe. We will adore God receiving the worship thus offered him, and taking his complacency in the soul of Christ.

II. We will consider three reasons for devotion to our Lord's interior life.

1. *Its loftiness.* In Christ as in us the soul is more excellent than the body. And in the soul there is nothing more perfect than the acts of the will. These constitute our Lord's interior life.

All his acts derive their value from his interior life.

2. *It is well known to us.* We have only an incomplete knowledge of his external life. But his interior life is fully manifested to us by the prophets and the gospels.

3. *We can imitate it.* We can not imitate everything in his exterior life. But in a limited degree we can practice all the virtues of Christ.

III. We will recall our special obligation to imitate our Lord's interior life. We will see that our entire seminary life leads to that end.

We will resolve to make of our whole life a sincere effort to imitate the interior life of Christ.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Adoration

Let us, in the light of faith, consider the interior life of our Lord's soul. Let us adore it as the holiest sanctuary in which God was ever honored.

In this august sanctuary dwells the Holy Trinity, filling it with majestic splendor and receiving the worship which Christ continually offers to God. Who can relate the wonders of that worship? *The heavens show forth the glory of God.*[1] *Thee the Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge. To thee the cherubim and seraphim cry with unceasing voice: Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Hosts.*[2] But a single act of worship on the part of Christ gives more glory to God than all these. All the religious acts from the beginning of the world until the end of time are of value only through union with those produced in the soul of our divine Lord. In that sanctuary alone does God receive homage worthy of him.

[1] Ps. 18[2] [2] *Te Deum*

Let us adore God accepting the worship thus offered him. *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*[1]

Considerations

Let us consider that in the sacred humanity of Christ there is nothing more sublime, nothing better known to us, nothing more imitable than the interior life.

1. *The loftiness of Christ's interior life.* In our Lord all is divine: his body and all its parts, his soul and all its powers, contracting a supereminent dignity by their personal union with the Word. However, in the elements that compose his sacred humanity we can distinguish different degrees of excellence.

In Christ as in us the body, considered in itself and in its substance, has not the same excellence as the soul. And in his soul there is nothing so lofty as the acts of the will by which, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he gave glory to God, humbled himself before him, worshipped him with a perfect love, and offered himself as a holocaust for the salvation of mankind. These are the acts which form his interior life.

[1] Matt. 3[17]

All his acts derive their value from his interior life. If his words had a unique charm and grace, it was because they expressed the divine thoughts of his soul. The incomparable perfection of his virtues arises from the same source. All the mysteries of his life were more perfectly accomplished in the interior of his soul by the dispositions which the Holy Spirit inspired. The visible, external mysteries were but the manifestation of these interior dispositions.

2. *His interior life is well known to us.* At first sight this would seem not to be true. His exterior life we learn from the gospel narrative; often we have reviewed its details: whereas his interior life seems to be more hidden. In fact, the greater number of Christians, incapable of sounding the mysterious depths in which that life is hidden, do not even know in what it consists. But, upon reflection, we will understand that this aspect of our Savior's life is better known to us than the other.

So far as his outer life is concerned, we know him only in a vague and incomplete manner. We have never been privileged to see his features or hear his voice. The actual details

of his acts are beyond the reach of the most painstaking research. The gospel accounts, precious as they may be, are far from satisfying our praiseworthy curiosity. All they tell us about those thirty years at Nazareth is contained in a few words written by St. Luke. The gospels do not pretend to be a complete account of his life. *But there are also many other things which Jesus did*,[1] says St. John.

Let us consider how his interior life is revealed to us.

The Old Testament, for those who know how to penetrate its meaning, is a series of types, figures, and ceremonies which disclose the inner life of the Messias. The Prophets, the didactic Books and especially the Psalms describe in detail the most intimate dispositions, thoughts, and feelings of the incarnate Word. As St. Ambrose remarks: *Omnia Christum loquuntur*.[2]

The evangelists, even though their accounts are so concise, admit us to a more perfect knowledge of our Lord's interior life, Sometimes a single word reveals a world of beauty and holiness in Christ's soul. For example,

[1] JOHN 21[25] [2] *De Virg.*

the simple remark of St. Luke: *He was subject to them*[1] or that of St. Matthew in the narrative of the passion, *But Jesus held his peace.*[2]

3. *We can imitate our Lord's interior life.* He is our model. In him we find the divine ideal that we are to reproduce in ourselves. The whole work of a Christian life consists in imitating this perfect example of holiness. But it is especially his interior life that we should copy.

Although in his exterior life there are some acts that we can imitate, there are many beyond our powers, provoking our respect and admiration.

In his interior life everything is imitable. Of course we will not be able to reproduce all the perfection of that interior. But we will find no detail that we can not propose to ourselves as a model. The virtues of Christ attained an eminent degree of perfection which he alone could attain. Yet there is not one among these virtues that we can not practice. We can, like him, be humble, patient, charitable, obedient, mortified. We too can offer religious worship to God; and we can have

[1] LUKE 2^{51} [2] MATT. 26^{63}

perfect purity of intention in our acts. The supernatural life which every Christian should live is an imitation of our Lord's interior life. Says St. Paul: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*[1]

Acts and Resolutions

My Jesus, thou dost call all Christians to imitate thy interior life; for the apostle teaches that only those will be admitted to glory who resemble thee. *For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son: and whom he predestinated, them also he called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified.*[2] Is not this an obligation still stricter for me because of my vocation? That vocation requires me to be not merely a dispenser of thy mysteries but a living expression of thy holiness.

To live interiorly the life of Christ and to manifest it in all my acts should be my ideal in the seminary. We read in the *Pietas Seminarii:* "This will be the one hope of all, the one meditation, the one exercise, to live

[1] Philip. 2^5 [2] Rom. 8^{29}

interiorly the life of Christ, which, however, should be made manifest in our mortal body.

Grant me, O Lord, the grace to know thy life and an earnest desire to imitate it. May I be able to say with the apostle that it is thou who livest in me."

I resolve to make of my whole life a sincere effort to imitate the interior life of Christ.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.[1]

[1] PHILIP. 2^5

XXXV

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the precious blood of our divine Lord by which we have been redeemed. We will thank him for having poured it forth in such profusion for our sake.

II. We will consider the precious blood

1. *Flowing in the veins of the incarnate Word.* It is the noblest part of his sacred humanity. We will try to appreciate the place of the precious blood in the divine economy of our salvation.

2. *Pouring from the wounds of Christ.* We will recall the seven times that it poured forth. We will thank our Lord for this manifestation of his love.

3. *Distributed in the Church* by means of the sacraments. It is the principal agent of every supernatural act.

III. We will rejoice that one day it will be our privilege to dispense this precious blood to others. Hence we should honor it by special devotion.

We will resolve to prepare worthily for the awful privilege of dispensing the precious blood of Christ, the Savior.

We beseech thee, therefore, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Adoration

In the spirit of holy Church let us adore the precious blood of our divine Lord by which we have been redeemed and sanctified. In heaven, on earth, and in purgatory the saving blood of Christ is glorified. The blessed in heaven proclaim it their joy and happiness. *Thou hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.*[1]

The Church on earth, before the altar of God, on which the spotless Lamb renews his sacrifice, lovingly adores and confidently invokes this vivifying blood. *We beseech thee, therefore, help thy servants: whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.*[2]

The souls in purgatory expiating their faults, turn hopeful eyes to the blood of Christ. It is in the merits of his blood that they look for deliverance. *Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.*[3]

In union with the Church in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, let us honor the precious blood of Jesus. And let us thank him for having poured it forth in such profusion for our sake.

[1] Apoc. **5**[9] [2] *Te Deum* [3] Apoc. **22**[14]

Considerations

Let us consider the blood of Christ flowing in the veins of the incarnate Word, pouring forth from his wounds, and distributed in the Church by means of the sacraments.

1. *The precious blood flowing in the veins of the incarnate Word.* It is an integral part of our Lord's sacred humanity. Of all the elements composing that adorable body, it is, after the Sacred Heart, the most worthy of our homage.

The blood is the noblest element of man's body. It penetrates every part, renewing the strength of the body, the mysterious agent of life. In a way, it is the point of contact between the corporal and the spiritual life of man, reflecting the changes and vicissitudes of the former, the acts and passions of the latter.

To it we are accustomed to attribute the greatness of a race and the nobility of descent transmitted from our ancestors.

The place of the precious blood in the divine economy of our salvation has been a subject of profound study on the part of learned theologians, it has had a surpassing charm for

devout Christians, and it is the glorious contemplation of the saints in heaven.

Is it not becoming for the Church to make the precious blood of our Savior's humanity an object of special veneration?

2. *The precious blood flowing from the wounds of Christ.* Seven times it poured forth. The first was eight days after the Savior's birth, at the circumcision; in the Garden of Olives *his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground*,[1] at the scourging in the pretorium; again under the pressure of the crown of thorns; on the road to Calvary; then on the cross from the wounds in his hands and feet; and its last drops gushed from his side which was pierced by the spear.

We would regard the least drop of this divine blood as far more precious than all the treasures of earth. It is the price of the propitiation for our sins. Generally in ancient sacrifices there was an effusion of blood in the immolation of the victim: *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.*[2]

With what superabundant love Christ poured forth his blood! The least drop would have sufficed to redeem the world. But to testify

[1] LUKE 22[44] [2] HEB. 9[22]

the extent of his love, he poured it forth with prodigal bounty. What innumerable blessings and graces he merited for us by his death? Has he not won our everlasting gratitude and love? *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood.*[1]

3. *The precious blood of Christ is distributed in the Church by means of the sacraments.* The blood shed for our redemption must be applied to our souls. The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and its life is derived from his precious blood.

The sacraments are so many channels distributing the blood of the Savior throughout the Church. It flows in every direction, vivifying, fructifying.

When applied to an infant in the sacrament of Baptism, it makes him a member of Christ's mystical body and elevates him to the supernatural life. For the repentant sinner it removes the stain of his offenses and restores grace and divine charity to the soul. At the holy table it gives new strength to the Christian soul.

The blood of Christ is the principal agent of every supernatural act in the members of the

[1] Apoc. 1[5]

Church. By it souls are sanctified; by it is formed that city of God whose beauty, now hidden, will be revealed to us only in heaven.

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, thou hast redeemed and sanctified me by thy precious blood. And thou hast called me to minister it and dispense it to others. At my word it will be present in the chalice that I will hold in my hands. I will actually drink this blood of the New Testament.

Since I am to be so intimately united to the precious blood, called to sanctify and save others by its power, should I not honor it by special devotion?

I resolve to prepare worthily for the awful privilege of dispensing the precious blood of Christ, the Savior.

We beseech thee, therefore, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.[1]

[1] *Te Deum*

XXXVI

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

SUMMARY

I. We will adore the cross as the altar of our Lord's sacrifice. It is the most sacred memorial of the passion. We will adore it as though we were present on Calvary.

II. We will consider the exaltation of the cross by Christ, by the Church, and by the saints.

1. *By Christ.* He chose this instrument of ignominy to be the instrument of our redemption. It became his standard, converting the world.

2. *By the Church.* She has taught her children to respect it. She pays great honor even to images of the cross. This cult is completed by the Christian practice of making the sign of the cross.

3. *By the saints.* Their heroic virtue and their spirit of self-denial comes from the grace of God. But the cross is the source of grace.

III. We will recall that to exalt the cross we should honor it in every possible way and should carry our cross courageously in the footsteps of Christ.

We will resolve:

1. To make the sign of the cross always in the spirit of faith;

2. To accept with patient resignation the crosses that divine Providence sends us.

Tuam crucem adoramus, Domine.

Adoration

Let us adore the cross, not as the ignominious instrument of punishment reserved for slaves, but as the glorious altar on which Christ consummated his sacrifice. It is the most august monument of his passion.

We honor everything connected with that passion. The scenes of his suffering are venerated by all Christians as sacred places.

But the cross, which was bathed in the blood of his sacrifice, and on which he performed the most august function of his priesthood is far more sacred. Prostrate in spirit before this holy relic, let us adore it as though we saw our Lord carrying it to Calvary or dying upon it. Let us repeat the words of the liturgy: *O crux, ave, spes unica.*

Considerations

Let us consider the exaltation of the cross by Christ, by the Church, and by the saints.

1. *By Christ.* He was the first to exalt the cross. Until then it had been an object of ignominy, an infamous instrument of punishment. The incarnate Word of God chose it to be the instrument of our redemption.

It was, in fact, of his free choice that the cross was elevated to this honor. The Jews demanded that he be crucified and Pilate condemned him to that form of death. But they were unconsciously executing the decrees of God.

Christ, then, had resolved to die on the cross. There was thenceforth a mysterious connection between Jesus and the cross. It became the standard of the Son of man, that will be displayed in the heavens when he comes to judge the world, the victorious standard that overcame death and hell. As St. Bonaventure says: *The cross is the gate of Paradise.*[1]

By the cross our Savior converted the world. The apostles, and after them all apostolic men, have said in the words of St. Paul: *We preach Christ crucified.*[2] The cross destroyed the idols, confounded the false wisdom of the philosophers, rendered futile the wrath of tyrants. It established the reign of Christ on the ruins of paganism. Truly it is *unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness: but unto them that are called . . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*[3] Christ and his cross are

[1] *Laud. de SS. Cruce.* [2] I Cor. 1[23] [3] I Cor. 1[23]

inseparable. We can not honor the one without honoring the other.

2. *By the Church*, which has always understood the eminent dignity of the cross and has neglected no means to make her children respect it. To-day she addresses the cross with praises such as these: *O crux splendidior cunctis astris, mundo celebris, hominibus multum amabilis, sanctior universis: quae sola fuisti digna portare talentum mundi: dulce lignum . . . salva praesentem catervam, in tuis hodie laudibus congregatam.*[1]

During the early persecutions devotion to the cross had already begun in the secret of the catacombs. With the peace of the Church came a great development of her liturgy. She has established two solemn feasts in honor of the cross and she regards even images of it as something holy and venerable. On Good Friday we prostrate ourselves before it and honor it with imposing ceremony. The Church erects the cross over her places of worship, above the altar, and in her cemeteries.

On the part of the Church the devotion to the cross is completed by the Christian practice of making the sign of the cross. It is found in

[1] *Ant. Magnif.*

every liturgical ceremony. By it the Church begins and terminates her prayers, blesses and exorcises, and employs it many times during the holy sacrifice.

3. *By the saints.* Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins—all the saints have risen to lofty heights of virtue and perfection. They are born in most diverse circumstances and are found in every walk of life. The moral features and the character of their holiness are quite different in different saints. What they have in common is the heroism of virtue, a boundless love for God and man, the self-denial of sacrifice, detachment from all created things, victory over the evil inclinations of human nature.

The grace of God makes them saints. But Christ merited that grace for us by the cross. Therefore the lives of the saints are a glorification of the cross. They have taken the words of St. Paul for their motto: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[1] At the foot of the cross they studied, prayed, and took their heroic resolutions. It was their refuge in temptation and the source of their courage in times of trial.

[1] GAL. 6[14]

Acts and Resolutions

My Savior, thou desirest thy cross to be exalted. It shared thy ignominy, it should now share thy glory. But how am I to glorify it? By honoring the images of it in every way possible and by courageously carrying my cross in thy footsteps. The former is easy. And yet have I not neglected it? Do I not habitually make the sign of the cross with careless inattention?

Is my life that of a true disciple of the cross? Am I patient in suffering? Do I practice self-denial?

Divine Master, by the power of thy cross make me faithful to these great duties.

Per signum crucis, de inimicis nostris libera nos, Deus noster. The cross is a book wherein I will find the teachings of thy divine wisdom; it is a divine ideal of perfection which I will try to attain; it is a source of grace with which I will endeavor to coöperate.

I resolve:

1. To make the sign of the cross always in the spirit of faith;

2. To accept with patient resignation the cross that divine Providence sends me.

Tuam crucem adoramus, Domine.

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